On Entirely Scientific Methods for the Relief of Dull Aches

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/7582618.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter
Additional Tags:	Medical Examination, Doctor/Patient, (but that's the point of the consultation), Anal Fingering, Prostate Massage, Anal Plug, Vibrators, Dubious Science, Historical Inaccuracy, Alternate Universe - Victorian, Nipple Play, Object Insertion, Orgasm Delay/Denial, Dom/sub Undertones, Hannibal is Hannibal, Spanking, Rimming, Comeplay, Additional Warnings In Author's Note, Violent Thoughts, Under-negotiated Kink
Language:	English
Collections:	Superduper Awesome Hannigram Fics, Karen divertidos, losing myself in
Stats:	Published: 2016-07-25 Completed: 2016-07-30 Words: 21,835 Chapters: 6/6

On Entirely Scientific Methods for the Relief of Dull Aches

by halotolerant

Summary

“Mr William Graham?” Hannibal cleared his throat, then held out his hand, indicating the way to his consulting room at the end of the corridor. “If you will proceed, I am able to see you now.”

“Ah. Good. Sorry.” The young man rubbed his palms together in a nervous-looking gesture but strode forwards nonetheless, heading for Hannibal’s distinctive red door.

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In which in Victorian London, Hannibal is a specialist in 'nervous disorders' and Will is a patient looking for just that kind of therapy...

Notes

Additional Warnings: The tags are thorough (and refer to the entire fic) but not exhaustive - if you would like to check if some particular kink occurs or not before reading, please feel free to contact me and ask.

In this story, Will is a patient at a clinic where you go to have a doctor make you orgasm for the good of your health (this was a genuine thing in the Victorian period, although never used for men - I've invented that aspect entirely), so although he has sexual contact with his doctor, that is what he showed up expecting to get.

Hannibal is Hannibal and Will is a mongoose and basically this is not an example for 'how to healthy relationship' but I've tried to keep everything light (there's some mild offscreen murder). I've invented some 'devices' and steampunked others, do not attempt any sexual practices without research.

Notes: This fic is complete and will be updated daily *g*

- Translation into 中文-普通话 國語 available: 关于如何用完全科学的手法缓解钝痛 by Yaegaki

Chapter 1

“Mr Graham?” Hannibal read out for the second time, glancing down at the index card in his hand that bore the next patient’s name in his secretary’s elegant copperplate. She would not have made a mistake; his filing system was immaculate.

And yet, there was no response. Looking up, he once more surveyed the small waiting room.

Small, but completely full, even on this cold November Thursday. Exclusivity as well as effectiveness had been the winning combination that made *Dr Lecter & Associates, Nerve Specialists,* of Harley Street, the success the practice was now. Every appointment they could offer was booked clear past August, and every time Hannibal opened his consulting room door there still seemed to be a person waiting to be seen in every seat.

The aforementioned associates - Dr Crawford and Dr Bloom - did carry their share of the patients, of course. And some men in Hannibal’s position - distinguished, in demand for research and teaching, never without a dinner invitation - would have wound down their personal medical practice by this point in their career to concentrate on such ancillary pleasures.

Hannibal, however, could not manage to feel that his work was complete. He had a sense that had troubled him some little while of something not yet fulfilled, a sense he had tried and failed to examine and which he frequently resorted to attempting to ignore.

In the meantime he had that privilege of working in a profession he liked, and so it was still his custom to take on an equal share of the new patient assessments each week, though any unduly tedious or unpleasant he would refer on to Jack or Alana for the commencement of any actual treatment.

Some of those undesirables would ultimately disappear from the practice’s books altogether. But not, alas, very often. That, Hannibal was forced to remind himself, would be impractical and counter-productive. After all, there were limits even to the stupidity of Scotland Yard.

Lady Chittenden, therefore, was still to be seen in his waiting room today, her little notebook out and her pencil scribbling away at her list of enemies. And Sir Victor would be keeping his regular Wednesday session, no doubt, untroubled by his other regular leisure activities of the week.

Hannibal had plans, long-laid, carefully reasoned, for Sir Victor.

“Mr William Graham?” he repeated, not allowing the thread of annoyance now creeping through him to appear in his voice. How irritating if this new patient also had to join the ranks of the unwanted - it wasn’t like Hannibal didn’t have enough to do as it was.

Suddenly, the door in from the street burst open, admitting a young man in a sharply tailored, figure-hugging black overcoat, the expensive lines of the garment marred by dust, as if he had dragged himself through the gutter on the way to making this appearance. He was young, his face fresh and bare, his hair spilling in chestnut curls from beneath his fashionable top hat.

“Beg pardon!” the intruder announced, panting. There was a beading of sweat on his brow, and his tongue swept, pink, over his bottom lip. “I have an appointment at a quarter to three I believe. I was in the process of…” he gestured vaguely at the door. “It was later than I realised.”

He blinked at Hannibal. Wide eyes framed by long lashes, pupils the dark pools of a prey animal.

“Mr William Graham?” Hannibal checked, after a moment. He cleared his throat, then held out his hand, indicating the way to his consulting room at the end of the corridor. “If you will proceed, I am able to see you now.”

“Ah. Good. Sorry.” The young man rubbed his palms together in a nervous-looking gesture but strode forwards nonetheless, heading for Hannibal’s distinctive red door.

Once inside the room, Mr Graham gazed about him, eyes even wider.

“It is a larger space than one might expect, yes,” Hannibal observed with a polite smile. He placed the appointment card neatly on the ledger on his desk, that piece of furniture being kept at one end of the long rectangular room, mirroring the black leather examination couch at the other. Between, two comfortable chairs faced each other, and it was to these that Hannibal moved now, adjusting his coattails to sit and then picking up his notebook and fountain pen from a low table nearby.

“If you would,” he said, and gestured.

“Ah. Yes. Yes indeed, of course.” Mr Graham licked his lips again as he moved over the floor, coming to sit in the second chair. He crossed and then uncrossed his legs. His trousers were fashionably tight-cut, but Hannibal did not think he imagined that they were slightly strained at the crotch.

Was that a blush staining the man’s smooth cheeks? Perhaps. It was hard to tell in the relatively dim light in which the room had, perforce, to be kept. Curtains always drawn, walls soundproofed, the consulting room had served Hannibal in many ways over the years but in the end it was excellent for its original, official, intended purpose of allowing him to treat the ‘nervous disorders’ of the human species.

Not that these existed, or were in any need of treatment - having reviewed the texts available, Hannibal in his private mind remained quite unconvinced either that women suffered frenzies of the mobile uterus or that men suffered excess or deficiency of male essence. He was comfortable, however, that his treatment of any of those conditions was, in the end, to the benefit of the individual concerned. And besides, and more importantly, the process was most interesting for him. The exertion of power and control over others had always been his true vocation, but he was ashamed to think now of how in his callow youth he had imagined such control physically was always a matter of violence or threat. People could be pinioned, flayed and entirely laid bare by quite other means.

And would indeed, it transpired, pay for the privilege.

“What, then, is the nature of trouble which brings you to me?” Hannibal asked, in his standard opening gambit. He held his pen as if ready to write, but kept his eyes sharply on Mr Graham’s face, eager to perceive every detail.

Who was this young man? An unthinking jack about town, careless of time and manners, or a polite but helpless type, incapable of organising himself? A pony for fashion or a person thoughtless of his clothes?

It didn't matter, in all truth, to his likely treatment, but Hannibal found himself wanting to know.

Shifting awkwardly in his chair, Mr Graham folded his arms. His throat moved and worked as he swallowed, and he looked away, towards one of the pictures Hannibal had placed on the wall to provide just such a distraction.

Then, however, and to Hannibal's surprise, he seemed to steel himself and turn back, his eyes meeting Hannibal's full on, determined.

"From what I have read, I believe my trouble is in the nature of a… vital excess." Mr Graham cleared his throat, raising a hand to make unclear gestures in the air that might fill the gaps where words were difficult. "I suffer frequently from, ah, nocturnal emissions, and almost as often the," he waved his hand, "*tumor virilis*."

"And when this swelling occurs," Hannibal asked, keeping his voice entirely level as he always did, having asked the question daily for many years, "do you proceed to attempt self-drainage? Please be entirely truthful, it is most important."

Definitely colour in those cheeks now, but Mr Graham's eyes stayed up, almost fierce.

"No, I am aware of the dangers of auto-manual stimulation, and I have never attempted it. However," and he coughed, and blinked again.

"Yes?" Hannibal asked gently, and became aware he was leaning forward in his own chair. Slightly disconcerted, he tried to make the move to lean back again appear quite relaxed.

“I saw an advert in the *Times*,” said Mr Graham, his voice gone low, almost a whisper. “It promised a ‘modern device’ to eliminate the build-up of vital fluids in the privacy of one’s own home. It arrived last week and it was…” he coughed, shifting in his seat, one hand moving towards his crotch before he arrested it, placing it on the arm of the chair instead. “When I did manage to divine its usage, it was most… efficacious. But it is rather difficult to employ, uh, by oneself, and I felt the time had come to call on the services of a professional man, as clearly that is the form of assistance I require.”

Hannibal nodded. “I think most people would call that very wise, Mr Graham.”

“You can help me, then?”

“That is certainly my profession.” Setting his pen and - entirely empty- notepad aside, Hannibal steepled his fingers and took a long, slow breath through his nose. He was unspeakably proud of the sharpness of his own mind, but he could have wished at that moment for it to have been less gifted at providing him an image of William Graham splayed on his bed, attempting to milk himself with some third-rate mail-order dildo, his member dutifully untouched, hot and hard and swaying until it finally spasmed and spilt and relieved his suffering.

Hannibal closed his eyes, breathed, and opened them again.

“Have you any other concerns about your health? Your health in any regard?”

“I don’t think so. I broke my arm when I was a boy, falling out of a tree?”

“That should not be relevant to the current situation. Then you take no medicines? No tablets or patent pills or tonics?”

“A distant cousin who reads a lot of pamphlets sends me something, it comes in a large green bottle. ‘Elixir of Athens’, I think is the name. I very rarely remember to take it. It made me feel… not myself.”

“Then please pour it away and do not take it again.” Hannibal did pick his pen back up and make a quick note. “The contents of such mixtures are often most deleterious to the digestive tract and as such will interfere with my course of therapy for you.”

“I see, yes,” and Mr Graham nodded rapidly, a fresh blush breaking over his face. Then his eyes darted sideways, as if he had noticed the examination couch across the room for the first time. He stared a moment, then looked once more at Hannibal, clearly biting back a question.

“It is not usually my custom to commence a course of treatment at a first visit,” Hannibal said, and was amused to see Mr Graham’s face fall. “But,” and he stood up. “As your case appears entirely straightforward, I think in this instance we may proceed at once. If you would step behind that screen, please, and remove your trousers and undergarments, and also your jacket and tie? Leave your shirt at it is, but loosen the collar.”

He felt a little sorry as he said it, his standard instruction. He would be prepared to guess that Mr Graham added to his other aesthetic virtues a torso such as the Ancient Greeks might have chosen to sculpt.

An association fell into chain in his mind and he shot a glance at the neat black box resting in the corner of the room, where the salesman had left it. Perhaps that would be something to try in this case? True, Mr Graham expressed that internal stimulation was quite adequate to meet his needs, but where would science be without experimentation?

That man was, meanwhile, dutifully behind the screen, and soon trousers and braces and a pair of socks were to be seen flung over the top screen edge. Then, stepping so carefully as to put Hannibal once more in mind of a skittish deer, Mr Graham emerged, his white shirt open at the neck, a small towel held at his waist to cover his lower half.

“Yes, and now on the examination couch.” Hannibal came over to stand by it.

As usual, with his patient on the couch the first time, Hannibal took a little while taking the radial and carotid pulses, and auscultating the heart through the modest covering of the shirt or blouse, allowing time for calm and for the patient to settle into their new position, before reaching out and with a deft flick removing the covering towel.

As he underwent this treatment, Mr Graham made a small sound, cut off as he bit his lip. Hannibal could well imagine why - without the benefit of the towel it was entirely apparent how aroused he had become in the course of their conversation.

"Entirely normal, I assure you," Hannibal said briskly, as he had said to hard men and slick women a thousand times before, and, as so often before, he expertly arranged Mr Graham's knees to allow his legs to fall open, exposing him entirely.

It seemed to have become hotter in the room. Perhaps that was why Mr Graham's stomach - what Hannibal could see of it - was coming up in pink blotches near his navel. His skin generally was very good, clear and pale, a tracery of veins here and there simply highlighting the overall translucency. His leanly muscular legs were lightly furred with hair, his member in a dark nest. He had neglected his toenails, but so had most young men. His toes themselves were long, his feet delicately arched.

"You have used your device quite recently, I think?" Hannibal observed, leaning in for a slightly closer look at where the eyelet of darker skin guarded the tiny opening to Mr Graham's body. It was reddened, a little puffy, and a few traces of something slick and glistening lingered around.

"Last night, I…" Mr Graham's face was the reddest part of him now. "I think it helps me to sleep. And yesterday I was… challenged by distraction."

"Improved sleep is a benefit of drainage, certainly," Hannibal murmured. He was conscious that his own voice sounded a little unlike itself, slightly hoarse. In close proximity of this kind the musk of a patient - and no human had not one - always became apparent. Often interesting, occasionally unpleasant, he had categorised and noted them all in his own arcane symbols in each patient's notes. But he was not sure what he would document in this case. Was that something of ice, beneath notes of hazel? As he watched, a clear bead of fluid formed at the tip of Mr Graham's member, and the smell grew incrementally stronger, and yet somehow harder to identify.

Hannibal cleared his throat. "However," he continued, and stepped back to adjust his cuffs, rolling up his sleeves. "I must demand that you cease all use of that device whilst you are in my care. It is essential that this course of treatment be measured appropriately, and I cannot ensure that, or your safety, unless I am in control of the times and volumes of your release."

“Quite, quite, of course.” The nodding of Mr Graham’s head would have put a wooden toy on a string to shame. There was sweat on his upper lip, and his eyes were very wide now, but he did not attempt to bring his knees together, and his member was thickening still, starting to fall back heavy against his belly. “Only, I think… well, you will see what you will see, but can it be possible to… to *require* exercise of that muscle, below?”

Hannibal frowned, and returned to the couch, forearms bare, a fresh pot of oil in his hand. Into this he dipped two fingers, and brought them to rest firmly but gently at Mr Graham’s entrance. “The muscle here, you mean?”

“Oh… Oh yes, I do…” Mr Graham’s eyes were closed, and under the tips of Hannibal’s fingers the eyelet twitched, and then again.

“You may refer to this as your fundament,” Hannibal told him, and pressed in a little. There was resistance, but also more twitching, and, bearing in mind the expression on Mr Graham’s face, he rather thought the grip on his fingers was active, seeking to draw him in further.

“Well then, I think my physiology requires me to have my fundament stretched.” Mr Graham coughed a little, and threw one arm over his eyes. “Oh… I think it must be good for me. Athletes, after all, stretch their legs or their arms depending on their sport - why should this be different?”

“Why indeed?” Hannibal murmured, not quite thinking. He had got the tip of one finger in entirely and he twisted it a little, pushing into tight, rippled heat.

Nothing so new – he had touched probably hundreds in this way – but like the seasoned traveller surprised to discovers something worthy of unprecedented awe, he quite lost himself in the exploration, with first the one finger and then two, and then - after an age, after his back was starting to complain of the standing and his wrist of the cramped position - with three fingers almost entirely inside, Mr Graham gone all sweet and loose under his ministrations, and covered in oil now.

Still that member, stiff and hard and surely throbbing, untouched and disavowed, bobbed hopefully above. Hannibal felt a ripple of professional annoyance at the conventional beliefs

that would make grasping that pretty pink shaft unethical and scandalous, whereas his current action remained entirely approved in all medical journals.

Well, approved in name. Perhaps not intended to be undertaken with quite such enthusiasm.

“Oh…” Mr Graham said faintly. His eyes were screwed up closed and then open, blinking, then screwed shut again as though he found the sight of Hannibal between his legs difficult in some way. “Oh… are you able to proceed to the drainage soon? I feel quite…” He made another noise, and was apparently unable to find a word.

Hannibal cleared his throat, drawing himself up and withdrawing his fingers. He dipped them once more in the little jar of oil. It was the standard practice always to use a fresh supply for each patient, but usually that meant wastage - he’d never come close to using one up before. “Indeed. That will form the completion of my examination.”

With some he might have expected wry humour at the pun, but Mr Graham simply nodded and laid his head back once more, ready and waiting. “Ah. Yes. Very well. Whatever you say.”

A raft of things that Hannibal could say, and do, and suggest, all occurred to him simultaneously, momentarily obstructing other thought and all movement. It was only the confusion of a moment, however, and he mentally noted these ideas as to be considered later, then proceeded in carefully returning his slick fingers to their welcoming recipient.

This time, he pushed in past his second knuckle. His were not small fingers, and Mr Graham made another choked noise, and went so far as to shift himself forward on the couch, presenting himself yet more completely.

When Hannibal found Mr Graham’s Posterior Gland of the Male, he realised that he had been delaying the gratification of discovering it. As he had expected, it was smooth and firm as a peach, and in much the same shape, and with his first touch to it Mr Graham let out what could be described as nothing but a moan.

Little matter, this was after all why the consulting room was soundproofed.

Hannibal set up a regular rhythm of stimulation, crooking his fingers and watching with acute interest as Mr Graham's face crumpled, his hands went to his eyes and his member stood stiff and tall once more and began to leak copiously. It was with the introduction, once again, of a third finger, that the spasm finally overcame Mr Graham entirely and the much-maligned white fluid was expelled. Hannibal had remembered, at least, to have a towel ready to place to catch it.

It was often his custom to retain these towels and further study the secretions under his microscope. He thought he would do so, in this case. He found himself thinking almost affectionately of Mr Graham's spermatozoa – lively fellows no doubt.

In the meantime, though, he must wash his hands, instruct Mr Graham in re-dressing and - with a glance to the clock on his desk - all with some speed, as somehow nearly an hour had elapsed and he was now late for his next patient.

Mr Graham, dressed and back in his coat - he seemed to have noticed the dust, at last, and was brushing at it sheepishly – soon looked quite proper again. He had availed himself of the jug and basin behind the screen and his hair was neatly dampened, combed and patted down, his skin losing its rosy tinge.

All entirely as it should be, of course.

"Thank you, ah…." Mr Graham went as if to hold out his hand to shake Hannibal's, stopped, started again, stopped and blushed. Ah, yes, there the colour was – quite wonderful, like something from a Turner sunset. "Do I return, ahem, next week or...?"

"If you speak to Miss Verger at the desk, she will undertake the necessary paperwork and furnish you with an appointment card." Hannibal cleared his throat. He was still towelling his arms. His wrist ached quite pleasantly now. "But yes, I would advise that your therapy be conducted, at least in the first instance, on a weekly basis. As time passes we may be able to reduce the frequency."

"Thank you, good, yes, thank you…" Mr Graham bowed, retreating.

No reason at all, really, to be irritated simply because the boy was walking and talking with relative ease so soon. Such was the redoubtable stamina of youth.

“And nothing with the device,” Mr Graham gave a short laugh. “I do remember.”

“Nothing with the device,” Hannibal agreed, allowing himself to be quite stern in his tone. “And next week we will see how best I may continue to assist you.”

Chapter 2

“No man may obtain that which he desires solely by the wanting of it, however he might frame that want as force of will or invocation of the plan of God,” Hannibal asserted and paused, looking round the lecture theatre, allowing his opening words to sink in. He was gratified to see a sea of expectant – and not a few disapproving – faces looking back.

Delivering these Wednesday evening lectures in moral philosophy at the Royal Institution had become one of the highlights of his week. After a highly successful series earlier in the year, he had been more than happy to accept their invitation to return. To expound his thoughts was entirely pleasing – he was frank enough with himself to acknowledge he relished an audience – and he had always delighted in outraging polite society in such a way that there was nothing they could do about it. In fact, not unlike his patients, they queued up desperately for the privilege of his manipulations.

Not, of course, that this was the most outrageous of his activities, but it was the one to which it was possible to affix his own name, and where he could personally and immediately witness the effects.

Until recently, in fact, this lecture series had been one of the main preoccupations of his time.

Over the course of the last several days, however, he had been glad to use the preparation of tonight’s lecture as a distraction from the thoughts that would otherwise have occupied his mind to the exclusion of all else. To use his accustomed frankness: he needed any focus for his reflections that was not Mr William Graham.

After all, to spend some passage of time in his free hours drawing up a proposed plan of treatment for a new patient was only proper. To spend all of two evenings on it, however, and not a little of the days between, was excessive.

On Monday night he had intended to attend a performance of *Don Giovanni* at Covent Garden, to wander in the lamplight after and smell the frost upon the air, and see what the dark streets might yield.

But he had *ideas*. So many ideas, multiplying and twisting over each other, lithe as young Mr Graham's pale limbs.

Closing his eyes for a moment, Hannibal took a breath and clasped tighter at the reins of his attention, directing himself towards his lecture and the eager crowd crammed into the high ranks of wooden seating around him.

"If we consider the words of Aristotle," he began, and gestured at the quote he had written on the chalkboard behind him, smiling to himself at the prospect of his own arguments. He lectured smoothly and slowly, enjoying the sound of his voice and its clear, perfectly grammatical English. When he had first travelled to Britain there had been some ready to question his abilities based solely on his Lithuanian accent, Count or not. Those people had been silenced, and almost all by the strength of his genuine abilities rather than his hand. Now he was sought by everyone, and had even dined with the Prince of Wales.

(A terrible man, he would have been an easy candidate for removal, but the subsequent political destabilization would be counter-productive to Hannibal's overall goals. And another period of national mourning would be unspeakably dreary besides.)

And so Hannibal's lecture proceeded, well-received, and concluded with rapturous applause, though a few dissenters stayed stern and unmoved, not least Professor Chilton, who was to be seen murmuring something to his neighbour, his eyebrow raised in apparent disbelief. In the discussion from the floor, the discourse – prompted by one of Chilton's more imbecilic comments - began to devolve into a heated debate about the power of prayer in relation to a supposedly blessed child recently discovered in France. At another time Hannibal might have taken up the challenge to slay each other of their arguments with his own, but he was bored already with his evening, the passing pleasure of the lecture being eaten away as the vague sense of unease which had pursued him for days returned.

A few audience members were filing out already, in dribs and drabs, more concerned with the contents of their bellies than their minds, and when Hannibal looked up again he found an envelope was sitting square on his desk, *Dr Lecter* written neatly across the front.

Another one!

He grabbed it and looked around, but no one else seemed to be paying attention to his actions and there was no sign of who might have been the one to leave it there.

Catching the eye of the chairman, he made a small bow and left the auditorium – to more applause, gratifyingly enough, but this he scarcely noticed.

Turning a corner to a quiet corridor, he tore the envelope open – and it was not his usual custom to tear envelopes.

The missive was, as usual, on good quality cream laid paper. Sent from someone who also appreciated the small fineries of life. Or who knew he did.

One sheet of notepaper inside. No watermark. No signature, merely the date and time, and this latter barely minutes ago, suggesting it had been written during his lecture, presumably by one watching in the packed crowd.

And under that, the sentence:

You claim no man gained anything by inaction, but you have forgotten the spider, which waits, trap laid, and allows what it wants to come to it. Of course, the spider must have the wit to know what he has caught. Would you?

Pepper and heat up his spine, Hannibal stared over and over at the words, furious, impelled to move, fight, retort, and incalculably frustrated that he could not, that he was alone in this moment.

Each week for five weeks, such notes, always provocative, had been arriving, sometimes at his lectures but also to his premises at Harley Street or even his home letterbox, and once inside the pocket of a suit he had sent to be tailored, and still he did not know from whom they came or for what purpose. He had meant to look out more carefully tonight, but he had so meticulously cleared his mind, and under that been so preoccupied, that it had entirely escaped him.

Sighing, biting his lip in annoyance, Hannibal slipped the missive into his bag to study later.

It was cold in the corridor, and the heavy smell of fog was penetrating from outside, portending a grim night. He would go home, to his elegant solitary supper and to his fire, and ponder this further over a glass of Armagnac.

But he must sleep. He had a certain Mr William Graham as his patient tomorrow, and for that man, after all, he had ideas.

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“Not so late this time! And that despite the fog!” was Mr Graham’s salutation when Hannibal, come to call him from the waiting room, set eyes on him for the second time. The young man seemed genuinely proud, almost breathless with this small nothingness of achievement, his hat clasped in front of him, his cheeks pink with exercise.

Or, perhaps, anticipation.

“Indeed,” Hannibal remarked. He had thought he remembered Mr Graham’s countenance very well, but he was struck afresh with the sight of him, and the remembrance, swift in association, of how that face had flushed and crumpled under his ministrations, the tears that had come to his eyes as he was transported by sensation.

In truth Hannibal had begun to discount that he himself could have been so moved by the encounter – he who had never been afflicted by a moment’s consideration of another person, unless it was in scheming their demise.

It seemed now uncomfortably likely that in this he had been deluding himself. The very sight of Mr Graham was causing a heated agitation of his own nervous system, a rushing of blood, a congestion of vital energies.

The calculating part of his mind, the reptilian cool that had served him true on many occasions, now suggested that he would be best, at this point of revelation, to inform Mr Graham he had been referred to another practitioner. That Dr Bloom would be of most service to him – surely they would make a pretty picture? And then Hannibal could discount the matter entirely. And yet the mere thought boiled his blood, and drowned his good sense, and then somehow they were down the corridor again, and him opening his consulting room door to let Mr Graham pass through.

"How have you found yourself this week?" Hannibal asked, when they were once more in the chairs, regarding each other. He flattered himself that his voice betrayed none of his internal excitements.

"It has been…" Mr Graham sighed heavily, and slumped back a little in his chair. "At first it was good, your… the therapy helped, I think, for a while, and I was not troubled, but then…" he sighed again, and waved his hand in the air. His pearly-pink lips worked for a moment, wracked, and flushed a deeper colour. "I had, on Sunday night, quite… irreligious dreams. I had an extra eiderdown, it being now so cold, but I think I could have burnt through all the bed covers. And then on Monday… well, put it this way, for all this week I have been somewhat beset." He shrugged, and gave a small, embarrassed smile.

"I see," Hannibal told him, and wondered whether to pick up his pen and attempt to write something, or to press further – that rapid sketch of life, in a man he knew so little of, seemed less than adequate.

"But I remembered what you had told me – I remembered, so well, all of my visit here," Mr Graham continued, leaning forward a little. "And I did not employ that device – it is somewhere on a dust cart now – and, of course, I did not attempt auto-manual stimulation."

Hannibal swallowed. "That is well done. I imagine that this was a situation which you found quite hard."

Mr Graham licked his lips slowly. "It would have been unendurable," he said, low and confessional, "had I not known that today I would be seeing you again." Those dark eyes did not blink. "To receive your most excellent and scientific therapy."

Hannibal frowned – for an instant he had thought he saw something of glint in Mr Graham's expression that… but it was nothing, the man had ducked his gaze soon after and was flushing again. He was sweetly innocent, and nearly lost, and it was for Hannibal to help him.

"Unless there is any other thing or symptom you wish to report," Hannibal said, "any palpitation or breathlessness, any weakness or change in dietary habit, then I think we might proceed to examination."

"Oh. Yes. No. I mean… nothing else of note, nothing at all." Mr Graham had stood up at once. And he was – Hannibal saw with once glance to his trousers – in all ways at attention.

"Please, then…" Hannibal told him, and gestured to the screen.

Mr Graham stumbled across the floor with his haste. It was foolishly endearing.

Leaving Hannibal with the unaccustomed problem of being somewhat more to attention than was comfortable himself. Indeed, his trousers felt quite constricting, even though they had been tailored well around his not not-unimposing anatomy.

It would not do to be seen in such a state by his patient – by any patient. And he had a preferred method for concealing himself from them, but he was used to employ it when he feared boredom would show on his face, not the reverse.

"Today," he said, once Mr Graham, small towel in place, shirt still on, had emerged, "I would like to examine your anatomy from another position. So, if you would please climb onto the couch and kneel, resting your weight on your elbows and knees? Keep your thighs straight so that your knees are below your hips, and allow your spine to curve down, as though I were to pour a bowl of soup in the small of your back."

With no little grace, despite a look of confusion, Mr Graham complied, and soon Hannibal was given the sight of him with the proud jut of his gluteal muscles pointed up, and the puckered origin of his distraction visible between them. Under his belly, his member hung heavy, and his testes were swollen, evidence of his week of abstention. Many young men and indeed women came to consult Hannibal professing they never touched themselves, and

Hannibal was quite accustomed to the idea that this was barely true in half of all cases. With Mr Graham, however, it seemed his instructions really had been followed to the letter.

"You have been suffering," Hannibal told him, not without sympathy or indeed a little admiration, and ran a hand soothingly over the back of his thigh before taking one of the testicles into his hand, weighing it gently and permitting himself the smallest of squeezes. Mr Graham gasped, as if punched, and tried to drop his pose even further, making himself by accident or design even more accessible.

Hannibal did not linger, however – whilst still within accepted medical practice to touch this part of the male anatomy, it strayed dangerously close to areas of heresy. He pulled his hand away, therefore, turned himself away – he must stiffen his resolve, and relax all other parts of himself, this racing pulse and heated skin would not do – and reached for another little jar of oil.

Never mind his *ideas*, his schemes, his long-imaginings of how he might play with this young man. He would simply stretch Mr Graham a little, digitally stimulate him to release of fluids and make a quick job of it, then refer him to Dr Bloom. She was – he was sure from his observations of the satisfied smirk often to be seen on the face of Miss Verger – entirely proficient with her fingers.

"Oh," Mr Graham said, breaking into Hannibal's thoughts, and his voice was high, a little thready. "I feel somewhat faint. Might I rest my head rather than hold it up? Would that be safe?" And then, slowly, as thought fearful of rebuke, he was lowering his shoulders, bringing his head to rest on his hands on the couch, and so pushing his plump behind even higher.

"That," Hannibal swallowed, and started again. "That will be quite acceptable. But the couch is quite firm - would you desire a cushion?"

"Oh. Yes please?"

Hannibal walked across the room feeling slightly dazed, and returned with the small velvet one from the chair at his desk. Handing it over required moving level with Mr Graham's head, providing a moment to study his face. He was looking more red now than pale, and his

eyes were very dark, his lips and tongue dry as he panted with slightly shallow breaths, a sign of deep parasympathetic arousal.

"Water?" Hannibal offered. And in a moment he was crossing his room again, and returning with a small glass of cut crystal from his own tray. He held it to Mr Graham's lips, guiding his head to it with one hand in his curling hair.

An entirely medically-minded man, he reflected, might have suggested ceasing the examination. And, perhaps, so ought he to do. Mr Graham, for all his denials, might have some heart murmur and be truly indisposed. That did not bear thinking about.

"Are you well enough for us to proceed?" he asked, softly.

The speed of Mr Graham's agreement would have amused him, had it not also been infuriating. "Oh! Oh yes!" Mr Graham's eyes were wider than ever, his supposedly faint head nodding so hard as to be like to shake his brains. "I am quite well enough for it, I am sure, quite well. Only… might I turn over? I think that I might need to…"

"You will have the examination in this position or not at all," Hannibal told him, sharply. He was cross with himself as well as the boy – to manipulate was one thing but to allow oneself to be manipulated? That was shameful.

"Oh, oh then I am sure it will be quite tolerable," Mr Graham was murmuring, reassuring, chastened. He dipped his head again, his damp forehead smearing on Hannibal's favourite cushion.

Hannibal stepped back. He could end the appointment here and now. He could refer this man or force him to leave the practice altogether. Would that satisfy?

Between Mr Graham's legs, that man's member yet twitched and dipped, and was connected to the couch by a thin strand of fluid. Hannibal paced around behind him, staring closely. That eager hole, very much exposed, was flexing, winking at him, now more flushed than it had been.

If he did not deal with Mr Graham's problems, from his arousal to his insolence, some other person would. This boy would not take denial.

Although… Hannibal's eye was drawn again to the view of tight, full testes. In truth Mr Graham had, in all the urges of his youth, denied himself for a week at Hannibal's request.

What Mr Graham needed most was evidently discipline, and as such it was entirely reasonable for Hannibal to provide just that as his mainstay of treatment. He was stifle his annoyance for Mr Graham's greater benefit and simply perform the role of his profession – to improve the lot of mankind. There, it all proceeded quite logically, and he could be as detached as he chose.

Hannibal took a breath. "First your fundament," he said, brisk, and dipped his fingers and almost immediately entered one in, not as gently as he had before. Mr Graham hissed, and quite a glob of emission fell with a noise to the couch.

"I… I am sorry. I am so full…"

"That response is entirely natural and need not concern you." Hannibal twisted his finger, pushing at the resistance of the muscular ring gripping him, and swiftly pressed deeper, proceeding to the stimulation of the gland without providing the gratification of stretch that Mr Graham had so clearly enjoyed.

Indeed, Mr Graham made a sound quite like a whimper, and pressed back, seeking, clearly hoping for more fingers, more width on which to spear himself.

"Stay quite still, please," Hannibal told him stonily, and rubbed at him with the one finger only, rapid. His own physical predicaments he had entirely forgotten in the focus on giving Mr Graham what he deserved.

If the boy so liked being stretched, he found himself thinking, he could take a speculum to him such as were used on women. He could spread him beyond the point of comfort, beyond

the point of coherence, and leave him there, spitted, and simply watch the frantic twitching of his inner walls as they sought relief from the ache of it.

He moved his hand faster, milking sharp and firm. This would not likely permit orgasm, unless he were to take pity and touch Mr Graham in another way.

And he did not feel like pity, just now.

“Dr Lecter!” Mr Graham called out, surging. It was the first time he had spoken Hannibal’s name, and this sound was quite unduly pleasing. His hands were gripping onto the couch in front of him white-knuckled, surely fighting the strong impulse and instinct to grasp hold of his member and soothe himself, guide himself to pleasure rather than disappointment. Hannibal had also seen men in such a state fold in on themselves, trapping their member between thighs and belly. Usually, although he had to lecture them on what was ‘healthy’ afterwards, he scarcely cared.

Now he watched in delight as Mr Graham stuttered his hips, began the movement, and stilled, and stopped, obedient.

In time, in a spasm under Hannibal’s finger, Mr Graham’s Posterior Gland of the Male did as it was intended and pushed the secretions out of him, ropes of it falling down to the towel on the couch below. But his member was just as swollen as before, and it was easy to tell from his breathing and the small, sub-vocal moans, that he had found no real satisfaction.

Hannibal slowed his finger, and smirked.

“Oh! You know so well what you are doing!” Mr Graham gasped. It did not sound like flattery. It sounded almost furious.

Hannibal’s smiled broadened. He withdrew, and went to clean his fingers. He was quite in control of himself now. He could afford to be generous. After all, it would not do for Mr Graham to leave Hannibal’s establishment of his own volition either.

No one else would be allowed to try to give Mr Graham what he was asking for. No one else, Hannibal thought with a sneer, would have the remotest ability to do so.

"That was not the muscular extension that you would prefer, I know," Hannibal said now, in an emollient tone such as he might use placating a Duchess, distanced and disinterested. "But during this week you shall try the benefits of that action in a more… sustained manner. Here," and he opened a draw, bringing out a small glass object, one of several he had had imported from France.

"What is that? A door handle? It looks like something from a chandelier." Mr Graham was twisting over his shoulder to look, frowning through the sweaty strands of his fringe.

"Get off the couch, please, then stand facing it and bend, leaning your elbows down. This is a medical device, a dilator, which I will insert in your fundament, and which you must keep inside you for the most part of every day this week, with periods of rest between which I will explain. It will keep you stretched, and perhaps this will prove soothing."

Or perhaps not. Hannibal schooled his expression to innocence, however. "Bending over the couch, please," he prompted again, and Mr Graham, as ever, was swift to obey, presenting his behind with what must be hopeful eagerness.

A forlorn hope, for he would find no pleasure today.

Hannibal was conscious, as he carefully spread the buttocks to gaze upon his target, of the way the man smelt there – musk and a little salt, and blood close to the surface of the skin – and of the wish to lick at him, and see what that might do to such a responsive subject.

Instead, of course, he dipped the glass dilator into the oil, and then pressed the tapered end against that sensitive orifice, which opened eagerly to admit it. He had not warmed the object, and though Mr Graham might not find in time that the weight or pressure could be easily ignored, for the present the coolness might actually be a relief.

Slowly but without hesitation, he pushed in the dilator – and it was by no means the smallest in the set – until the full heft of it was seated, and Mr Graham's opening hugging hopelessly

at the thin end before the wide flare of the base.

"And how do you find that?"

"It is…" Mr Graham rocked on his toes, and ducked his head. "Oh, it *aches*!" He sounded entirely pleased with himself, and the situation.

"Get dressed, and I will write an instruction list for when you must put it in, and for how long, and how it is to be kept clean." Hannibal went over to his desk, drawing out a fresh sheet of notepaper and uncapping his pen. "And then, on your way out, speak to Miss Verger and tell her the next appointment is to be this day again next week."

"A week!" Mr Graham explained, and he was frankly pouting, childish. "A week can't be right!"

Hannibal drew himself up. "You are questioning my medical judgment?"

"No, no, not that, of course…" Mr Graham sighed, waving a hand apologetically, and retreated behind the screen, from whence slight noises of discomfort could be heard as he bent and stretched to dress in his heavy winter clothes.

An earlier reunion than seven days hence might well have been pleasant, Hannibal reflected as he wrote. But he could not suggest it now, Mr Graham had scuppered his own chances there. And besides, Hannibal had long been planning to dine with and later dispose of a certain reprehensible politician on the next Tuesday evening, and must needs concentrate entirely on that matter for the present.

At the current moment, though, with Mr Graham's sighs and whimpers dropping lightly upon his ear, he might have felt content to let certain MPs continue fleecing their constituents for many decades yet unimpeded.

Chapter 3

It was Tuesday morning. Hannibal had begun his day in a complex discussion with his wine merchant in the matter of the vintages he would be serving for himself and Mr J.T. Nizer, Member of Parliament for Lower Hackney, that evening. Hannibal liked to cook for himself, as a rule, and for numerous reasons kept no servants resident. On occasion, for dinner parties of larger numbers and from which he intended all the guests to depart alive, he hired temporary staff, but for tonight he would serve them both himself, affecting it as a vague and very continental eccentricity. Then he would invite his guest to the library to smoke. The library he had long ago had soundproofed by the same firm who had done his consulting room. It also boasted wide-opening French windows permitting a swift exit to a quiet alley, and a parquet floor surprisingly easy to wipe down. Concealed within the floor was the trapdoor to his basement.

It was with his mind in such places and occupied with such plans that he came in to the Harley Street offices that morning, and took from Miss Verger his post. As he sorted through it, the doorbell rang, and she, having gone to answer it, returned with a telegram in her hand.

“The boy says he’s to wait for a reply, it being a medical matter.”

Hannibal nodded, and took up a paperknife from her desk to carefully slit the envelope open.

The thin slip of paper within was blazoned with the block capitals of the mindless machine which had transcribed the words:

110 BARCHESTER SQ. LONDON.

DR LECTER. SINCE LAST APPOINTMENT SYMPTOMS HAVE WORSENED. ACHING NIGHTLY. I AM APPLYING THE DILATOR AS INSTRUCTED BUT FIND MY WALKING AND SITTING IMPAIRED. I AM FEVERISH. STRONGLY REQUEST YOUR URGENT ATTENTION. REGARDS. GRAHAM.

Biting back a growl of irritation, Hannibal re-folded the message and jammed it and its envelope in his pocket, then gathered back up his other correspondence and paced rapidly down the corridor. Miss Verger, who had not risen to and retained her current role by being foolish, could be heard already at her typewriter, giving out the impression of having witnessed nothing.

No sooner was he in the safety of his consulting room – safety! It was all Mr Graham, smelt of him, resonated with him! – than Hannibal recalled that the Post Office boy would have no such discretion, and might well linger until the intended reply was received.

Sitting at his desk, he took a telegram pad from the top drawer and scribbled quickly – Mr Graham had not earned courtesies.

57 HARLEY STREET, LONDON.

YOU WILL BE SEEN AT YOUR REGULAR APPOINTMENT TIME. LECTER.

He rang for Miss Verger, and when she entered handed the message over to be dispatched back.

Then, and with a sigh, he tried to return to his plans for the day, and not to think of Mr Graham, feverish, foolish, foppish Mr Graham, dilated and demanding, writhing somewhere and panting in hope of Hannibal.

He was not quite entirely successful.

Every time thereafter that the doorbell rang, Hannibal's spine stiffened, but there came no further communication of any kind. He toyed with composing a further instruction, something clarifying – 'you are to continue your use of the dilator' or 'continue to do as I have instructed' or 'remember the virtue of restraint' – and even got so far, once, as to draw out the telegram pad once more, before letting out a short, mirthless laugh at himself and casting it aside.

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In the event, Hannibal was able to look back on his Tuesday evening as quite a success. His choice of ingredients for the soup had proved most complementary to the veal of the main course, his bottles of Merlot-Carbernet ’04 had emerged to be more delightful even than his merchant had promised, and Mr Nizer would no longer be a problem to any man, woman or child. The walk with the cart bearing the body to Highgate Village, in the depths of the night, had been refreshing despite the chill and quite picturesque. The tableau he had arranged at the cemetery resulted in some most pleasingly *reportage* in the late edition of the *Times*.

(And the more lurid illustrated periodicals, but he did not act for them, and disdained to read them or contemplate their ridiculous sketches of the supposed physiognomy of the ‘headstone hangman’.)

Wednesday, then, and his Royal Institution lecture, and Hannibal was determined on this occasion to keep his wits about him and determine at last if the leaver of notes was among those present. No such message had come so far in the week, suggesting that it would be tonight that another contact was made; they had been entirely regular so far.

At first, weeks earlier, he had been sure the note-writer should be on his list for disposal – such presumption could not be tolerated. By now, though, and after so long without being able to detect them, he felt a certain intrigue. He was not sure he wanted such a person removed altogether from his existence.

That evening, however, despite what he considered a particularly fine piece of rhetoric on his part regarding the power of humanity to will invention from the seas of ignorance, no note came.

Chilton asked a facetious question about Ancient Greeks and their bathtubs, and Hannibal went so far as to answer it, allowing himself a little more venom than he might normally employ – the man was left sputtering, but that in itself was not sufficient to make the evening a success.

It was an unpleasant sensation, the awareness of matters slightly beyond his compass and control, of events unspooling that he might not have planned. He felt a deep nostalgia for the

calming certainty of the kill the night before, and wondered if he might dare increase his frequency of such diversions.

Then, as he was moving to leave the auditorium, he was accosted by the man who sat at the desk inside the door to direct all comers to their proper places within the building. This man was carrying, Hannibal saw with a sudden burst of emotion that he could not place, a small, cream-laid envelope.

“This arrived for you, Dr Lecter.”

Inside, the carefully calligraphed note:

Circumstance compels me to miss what I am sure will be another excellent lecture. It is not what I would want. Indeed what I want so far eludes me. But then, for someone who professes to discourse upon the subject, you are not particularly accomplished either, are you, at getting that which you desire?

Hannibal could only sputter. The receptionist, looking nervous, clearly believing himself to have been the messenger of some note of criminal slander, offered to dispose of the letter in the nearby grate.

Straightening his shoulders, Hannibal thanked the man and declined, and put the letter in his inside pocket. He found there was a crumple of paper already inside – the envelope and message from Mr Graham’s outrageous telegram.

Quite incensed, he stalked out into the street glad to be enclosed at once into the thick and cloying fog. Deciding not to hail the cabs whose lanterns could be perceived only dimly from the curb, he started walking, setting his feet eastwards, and to Soho.

Tonight, he would not act in passion himself. That would be poor self-discipline indeed, to grab at such solace like a child. But he wanted to move among people he could easily despise, and he was in no mood for the upper echelons of society.

In the darkest bars, in the sea of people and the hum of many voices, under the cheap music and the stench of sexual transaction, there he would marinate in his own displeasure, glad to be alone, untouched, impenetrable.

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Come Thursday afternoon, then, Hannibal had developed a state of mind that put the other doctors at his practice to whispering quietly rather than addressing him, and induced him to resort to the electromechanical devices available in the surgery for his female appointments, rather than the manual method of climax-induction which he found generally preferable and to his mind more refined.

He was in no mood for good temper any more, and neither for subtlety. One of the women, leaving, went so far as to hope that he was not suffering under the migraine, and to assert that the hot winds from France were quite intolerable, and should not be allowed, and that someone really ought to do something about the French generally.

Hannibal transferred her card to Dr Crawford's box, and then added her name to another, more private list of his own. It provided only fleeting satisfaction.

During his lunch, he instructed Miss Verger to send his remaining patients – there were none he had allowed to be scheduled besides Mr Graham, as well he knew – directly through to him. He would be damned if he'd go and fetch the man like a servant.

It was only as Mr Graham entered the consulting room, therefore, that Hannibal first saw the way in which he was walking.

Had Hannibal not known already what Mr Graham was carrying within himself, he would have had little trouble guessing correctly from that walk, that clenched-tight caution, or from the way the boy sighed, eyes widening, as he sank into his usual chair, placing his hat carelessly on the table, pulling off his gloves. He was, this week, very much the dandy, his waistcoat nipped in to the point of giving him a feminine waist, and it put Hannibal's blood up.

With careful, contained movements, Hannibal rose from behind his desk, and came to sit in the chair opposite.

“I am not accustomed,” Hannibal said icily, before Mr Graham could open his mouth, “to being summoned by telegram.”

“Ah, yes.” Mr Graham leant forward, then winced and thought better of it, and came upright again, and licked his lips. “That. That was boorish of me.” He winced – it might have been contriteness. “I apologise. I was… quite severely beset with sensations, the day I sent that message.”

“And yet you have persisted in the use of your dilator?” Hannibal couldn’t help pointing out. He wasn’t sure if that was admirable endurance or sheer foolish doggedness.

“As you instructed,” said Mr Graham, coyly, and shifted a little. “I will confess, though, I am eager to see what the next step in this treatment will emerge to be.”

“I know that you are eager, Mr Graham. I know that above all things, I assure you.”

This was met with a tilted head, and a slightly strange look, but in the next moment the man had risen to his feet. “In that case might I go behind the screen now? Since you know I cannot easily wait.”

“No,” Hannibal snapped at him, “you may sit down again. Your impatience is not necessarily to be rewarded.” Hannibal steepled his fingers. He wanted to snarl, and to roar, to bite. He had often fancied himself a predator but never had he felt this hunger, this call of abandon. It had crawled into his veins like fog into his lungs, obliterating all clarity.

Who was he, here? In whose company did he sit? How did this scene play out?

“Indeed? You say so?” Mr Graham curled his lip. “I had fancied, yes, that this task of my week might be in fact a punishment for how I was when we saw each other last.”

“A punishment? I am your doctor, not your schoolmaster. I do not keep a cane in my cabinet.” Watching the effect of his words closely, Hannibal was unwillingly thrilled but not surprised to see Mr Graham flush. That had touched a nerve. Now, taking a slow breath, affecting perfect collection, Hannibal made a miniscule adjustment to the pen on the table beside him. “Did you like your school days, Mr Graham?”

“Um. I suppose so?” Mr Graham, caught, looked back at him. He had been staring in the direction of the cabinet at one end of the consulting room. There was, in fact, currently a forty-inch measuring rod leant against it – for a matter of new curtains, but Mr Graham was not to know that. Hannibal bit back a grin that wanted to be all teeth.

Mr Graham rallied a little. “Yes, I suppose I liked school as well as anyone. I was fond of natural sciences, and mathematics, and wished to pursue a course of study at Oxford, but men in my family, Dr Lecter, do not work, and so here I am, dissolute.” He said this last with a twist of his lip.

“You describe yourself as though you in fact sought chastisement.”

“When I was at my school,” Mr Graham shot back, “the teachers who flogged me told me it was for my own good. Has medical science failed to find hard evidence for such statements?”

Hannibal stood now, and paced towards the other chair, forcing Mr Graham to crane his neck back to continue seeing his face. “You would be surprised,” he said smoothly, “what manner of things are done for which there is no scrap of evidence at all. Now, you may go and remove the appropriate clothes, and then you are to lean over the couch as you did when I first inserted the dilator, and I will look at you.”

And, that achieved, quite a sight it was.

Hannibal allowed himself to tap at the end of the dilator a while before he pulled it part-way out, waiting for the moment when the widest part held the orifice at its most open, taut and strained, before pushing the whole back in again between the rounded buttocks.

Mr Graham, nearly naked, very pink, hard and once more leaking all over a nice clean towel where it lay on the examination couch in front of him, made a kind of squeak. It was like the finest music, Hannibal decided, and so thoroughly deserved.

For the first time in seven days, something in the pit of Hannibal's stomach was allowing itself to unwind.

But then, "I held it just like that, just there, s-sometimes, as I went to take it out," Mr Graham confessed through his gasps. "Oh… it was… I do so like to have that part of me stretched. I mean… I feel it is very good for me. Most therapeutic."

"Is that so?" Hannibal grasped the base and swiftly, viciously pulled the dilator out entirely. Accustomed to fullness, the muscle did not immediately close. "But having had what you wanted, you are loose now, do you comprehend?"

Mr Graham made no sound, but leant over further, apparently choosing meekness as the better part of valour. His member grew a darker red.

"Which is all," Hannibal continued, his tone more level, slightly more appropriate – he ran a soothing hand down Mr Graham's flank - "entirely as one might expect, but as a side effect it must be corrected."

"Y-yes?" Mr Graham had turned his head to look at him, but stayed bent and in position, legs dutifully splayed.

"Yes indeed." Hannibal carefully placed the dilator in an enamel basin and then wiped his hands on another towel. "And the best way to correct this relaxation of muscle is through sudden stimulus, leading to reflexive contraction. Therefore," he smiled to himself – for one brief second everything was falling into place, sweet and certain in his veins – "I shall deliver some light percussive impacts, increasing in intensity should it become apparent that such is required."

Mr Graham's eyes fluttered closed. He swallowed, visibly, and let his head hang down again, his fringe brushing the upholstery of the couch.

“Thank you, Dr Lecter,” he said, so hoarse it was almost inaudible.

The first smack Hannibal delivered was, as he had promised, scarcely a blow at all. Despite that, there was a clear reactionary quivering of the anal sphincter muscles as Mr Graham responded, and a most gratifying choked breath.

“You will make me aware if you experience undue discomfort,” Hannibal commanded, and brought the palm of his hand down again. It felt so awfully pleasing, this, this viscerally connection, this strange mixture of inflicting pain and bringing pleasure, of damaging and healing in one. He had had patients ask for this before, never before had he wanted to deliver it. He had always assumed he would feel foolish. He did not feel foolish now.

Down and down and down he brought his palm, stronger each time. Mr Graham’s skin was turning red, and the sounds were ringing out, of the blows and of his lovely high gasps, and Hannibal squared his feet and his shoulders like a man released back into cool Alpine air from the smog of the city.

After a little while, sated in some peculiar way he could not easily have named, he drew back.

Before him, Mr Graham was quivering, making a sound that was only a low, formless murmur, his bent body weaving back and forth as though searching for the next blow. Sweat had moulded his shirt to his back, and his spine was one sleek furrow that lead inexorably to the cleft of his buttocks as a river to the sea. When Hannibal stepped back further, Mr Graham twisted to look beseechingly at him and moaned in what sounded like sheer hopeless frustration.

If prior history was anything to go by, Hannibal reflected, the man would once again have resisted all temptation of giving himself his own release. Which made two weeks that he had gone unpleasured, and with a dilator in place for the latter of them.

“Good boy,” Hannibal said, scarcely commanding his own lips to make the words, and reached out to part the globes of Mr Graham’s behind and study him yet again, captivated by the sight.

The demanding orifice was quite closed up now, and yet red as a rose, and still so very swollen, no doubt thudding also with the intensity of Mr Graham's pulse. Oh it would love a tongue, that pucker, would love to kiss back at a willing mouth.

"We cannot drain you in the usual manner today," Hannibal said smartly, and dragged himself and his thoughts away from temptation.

Then, over the little, wistful moan which met his words. "Not and undo all that good work. But modern medicine does not leave us without recourse. Stand up please, and stretch your back and limbs as you choose."

Mr Graham unbent, coming up straight with the poise of a dancer. He was hard, perhaps not as much as when internally stimulated, but yes, the testes beneath did appear uncomfortably full.

Hannibal met his eye. There was, of course, one simple, natural method to effect emptying of the male organ, but there could be no question of that, not today or ever. Before proceeding, he must test his own strength; look Mr Graham in the face and resist the urge to step closer. If he could do this once, he could do it a hundred times.

He weathered the moment – Mr Graham ducked his head first, blushing – and with quiet relief went to his cabinet.

Not for the measuring rod – he had no wish to cause further injury presently – although he imagined with some delight that Mr Graham might momentarily suspect it. Instead he opened one of the cabinet doors, and drew out a neat wooden box about the size of the body of a gramophone. From this he took what he knew would appear to be only another slightly smaller box. This item was curved on the top like the inside of an arch, and had a metal cranking handle set into one end.

Carefully – they were not cheap - he brought it to the examination couch, set it in the middle, and draped over it a rubber sheet from the drawer of sterilised items.

He turned to look at Mr Graham, who was still standing waiting, one arm holding the other by the elbow under the open cuff of his shirt, his foot lifted to scratch at the back of his other calf. He looked vulnerable and uncertain, tousled and trembling, and never before had the presence of his shirt irked Hannibal so much. He must find some reason to do away with that - strip him of all of it, and leave him nowhere to hide at all.

"First, we prepare the machine. It is very efficient – the latest design." Hannibal began turning the cranking handle in order to store energy *in potentia* so he could switch the machine on.

Mr Graham's expression became yet more dubious.

With a smile, task complete, Hannibal drew back.

"Climb onto the couch, and kneel astride the object, please."

Mr Graham sniffed, though he moved to comply. "Does it have a name?"

"I believe the inventor wishes it to be known as 'Professor Drank's Patent Anti-Hysteria Massage Saddle'. But I threw out that leaflet, and made a few modifications of my own. That man knew nothing of his ferrous metals."

It was designed for females, but Hannibal had used it for men before - as was his usual habit with machines, only in cases where boredom threatened. Inside the box, close to the surface where the patient sat, abutting their perineum, was an oscillating motor that vibrated (many more hundreds of times per minute since Hannibal's improvements), and swiftly lead to what the original marketing had called 'a thorough relief of all tense energies and impulses.'

"Electricity?" Mr Graham frowned, settling himself on the box, his knees either side and pressing into the couch cushions. "I suspect you maybe trying to chastise me, again, Dr Lecter, and I…"

Eyebrow arched, Hannibal flicked the switch.

"Oh!" Mr Graham cried out, and fell slightly forward over the device. Losing his balance, he flailed out and grasped suddenly at Hannibal's arm, then found his hand.

His grip was tight, flexing in waves as the machine must in waves be affecting him. His palm was hot, no relief against where Hannibal's skin was still bruised from delivering the impact therapy.

At once – as soon as Mr Graham was righted - Hannibal drew his hand away. Nonetheless he still felt that Mr Graham's fingerprints were imprinted on his skin.

Mr Graham moaned. "I'm sorry, it's just… oh… oh my…"

Opening and closing his mouth, he then seemed to give up on words altogether. He was squirming, pressing his erection and the sac beneath against his vibrating perch, but also still trying to get his cleft and the sensitive skin there stimulated, rocking back to force his buttocks to part. Increasingly, his movements began to lack clear intent; he started sobbing, his hands now clenching and unclenching helplessly at his sides as he rode.

Then – swiftly, surely, the sight sent a bolt through Hannibal's stomach – he raised one of his hands and tried blindly, weakly to rub at his chest, apparently seeking the nipple.

"Do you like to stimulate yourself there?" Hannibal asked, reaching out automatically and pulling Mr Graham's hand back and away. For a moment again their palms were touching – it would be quite something, of course, to hold both Mr Graham's wrists, hold them behind him and deny even that freedom, and then with his own other hand wander under the shirt and tug at those nipples for himself. To bite at his neck, put teeth around his straining tendons and…

"I…. Oh… I never heard that I shouldn't touch them, I…" Mr Graham was rocking firmly now, intense little thrusts of his hips, and his hand still in Hannibal's, the skin growing slick with sweat between them. "I do… the sensation… only they are…ah! Ah! Ah!"

And dissolving into cries, writhing, Mr Graham threw his head back as from him finally gushed out all that excess male essence with which modern medicine would have said was burdened. Indeed it shot over him, covering his shirt and chest and the bottom of his chin. He cried out like one broken quite apart.

His grip on Hannibal's hand might have bruised bone.

Hannibal, his mind on fire, knew how he felt.

Awkwardly, he stepped back even as Mr Graham tried to catch his breath. From a distance he watched the man tremble and whine, and only latterly realised the machine was still at work, still offering friction to that over-stimulated skin.

There was a spatter of Mr Graham's spend upon the back of Hannibal's hand. He stared at it, mouth watering, before moving to pick up a towel.

Once more, in assisting Mr Graham down from the bench and finally to rest, it was necessary for Hannibal to touch him, to cup a hand gently around his elbow and help bear his weight. Mr Graham was quite undone, shaking, and it was help him himself or call in a third party.

Hannibal lead him slowly to 'his' chair, placing a towel on the cushions and then, once Mr Graham was seated, another towel over his lap in quiet modesty.

Strange that he had felt moved to do this latter, because he would not have minded at all watching the soft suffering of Mr Graham's spent member a little longer.

The only sound in the room over the next few minutes was the decreasing amplitude of Mr Graham's panting breaths. He was sitting with his head falling forward, his eyes closed, his arms gripping the arms of the chair as if fearful of slipping off.

Hannibal allowed him to wait, without comment or interrogation, until he could gather himself enough to choose to get up and go to change. During this time, Hannibal sat at his

desk, and pretended to attend to his correspondence.

The pulse in Mr Graham's neck fluttered under thin skin. He was dripping with his own spend, and still his legs fell open, and when at one point, perforce, Hannibal cleared his throat, Mr Graham's head had shot up, looking nothing so much as *ready*.

Hannibal studied the letter he was re-reading for the fifth time, however, and in due course Mr Graham did move, and soon was cleaned and somewhat tidied, and standing once more ready to cross Hannibal's threshold.

"Next Thursday, then," Hannibal said, briefly looking up, with all the quiet calm he could muster.

He could control this. He must.

Chapter 4

Hannibal's resolution following their last appointment – not to think unduly or unprompted about Mr William Graham – was proceeding almost entirely according to plan, and he was feeling quite content with himself when he entered the London Library on the subsequent Tuesday afternoon, desirous of consulting some old volumes of the *Lancet*.

In fact the only aberration in his usual schedule had been the necessity – unusual and unexpected – to provide himself with physical release in the early hours of Friday morning when he had left his research to go to bed. He had been aware, from medical studies, anecdote and popular culture, that many men did experience urges to masturbate so intense that they could not deny themselves and remain calm, but he had never before experienced such a sensation.

He could have restrained himself. Of course he could. He had undergone worse physical punishment in his life, and concentrated through more intense distress.

But was that necessary, now? Surely the point of those sacrifices had been in order to allow him to indulge his own pleasures, however he chose to take them?

Therefore he had proceeded in the logical manner and, having furnished himself with some oil that was in the way of being a sample preparation for the clinic, had taken his own cock into his hand and stroked himself expertly to a quiet end.

Cleaning up his own resulting product, he had smiled to himself. For some of the male patients who came to his practice, it was a deficiency rather than excess of male essence that they thought was their malady – often they feared they had drained themselves in solitary practices, and believed literature handed to them by fools. Others troubled themselves that they were effete, and that this apparent deficiency was the cause. For them, his treatment involved a series of tablets that he claimed were concentrated extracts from the glands of bulls (in truth they were quinine, he was no fool), and mild electro-stimulation of the testicles. The placebo effect, as so often, did the rest.

He had often wondered, though, whether he could go so far as to convince them their best cure would be to ingest the semen of other men. Even perhaps his own? Even directly, delivered to the mouth?

And If Mr Graham had initially come complaining of deficiency, Hannibal had then reflected, his mind foolishly permeable to memory in the rush of recent pleasure, how much greater would the temptation have been to experiment in that way?

How might that have played out? Would Mr Graham's lips have been willing to…

At this point, despite the efficiency of his earlier exertions, it became necessary for Hannibal to touch himself again.

All of that interlude, however, had been days ago, and he was proud to think now that he was managing extremely well. He had further finalised his plans for the disposal of Sir Victor (for the elucidation of which purpose he sought the journals today), prepared for himself the night before a dish of dover sole excellent even by his own standards, and re-ordered his collection of petrified wood.

With two bound volumes of journals taken from the shelves, Hannibal carried them through to the atrium area of the library, in which, under a domed skylight, members could sit in armchairs near the fire and converse and be brought tea and muffins, or work at one of the many small desks with their green leather tops.

As he entered, there was a peal of laughter, and he winced. He did not wish to move to the silent reading room – the only other available - as it was very draughty and much less well lit. A low level of conversation he could tolerate, but this raucous mirth boded ill, for his afternoon's study and for the health of the person who had chosen this place in which to be so merry.

"But surely, sir, you see at once that this is folly!"

Hannibal paused at the door, books still cradled in his arms. He knew that voice.

“No, no, no! I will not let that pass,” the same voice continued. Near the fireplace, his bouncing curls beautifully illuminated by the light from the fine gas lamps, Mr William Graham leant forward in his armchair and sighed at the man he was addressing with such intensity. “You cannot predicate virtue on an idea that is already a definition of virtue! If we say that God is good, and then that the attribute of goodness is that it is like to God, we have said nothing at all.”

“No, Will, why should that be so?” the other man retorted. Hannibal shifted to study him, eyes narrowing. This other was about Mr Graham’s age, also handsome and somewhat dandyish in his dress, and had gone so far as to sprawl sideways across his seat with his knees hooked over one arm, the soles of his shoes no doubt scuffing the leather. He was smiling too – for all the volume of the debate, it was clearly playful. “People talk of God all the time. Go to any of my mother’s salons and see if they don’t!”

“But that is not at all the point that I am making!” Sighing, Mr Graham leant back once more. He was moving easily now, no trace of the lethargy that had overcome him in the wake of his time on Hannibal’s couch, or indeed of any lingering discomfort in the skin where he had been… therapeutically impacted.

Oh, those red lips had formed different sounds then!

Hannibal swallowed, and took a short breath. This meeting was entirely to be expected, in truth, and betokened nothing. He did not live in a vacuum, neither did Mr Graham. A crossing of paths of this kind was nothing so unusual, and as a doctor it was his role to retreat and avoid any embarrassment, as he would with any other patient. He had his reputation to consider as well as their own, and no one wished to have their nervous hysteria treated by an indiscreet man.

“I say! Go in or out as you like but close the door can’t you? There’s a hideous chill coming in!”

It was Mr Graham’s companion, imperious and loud, craning up from his slouching posture simply to be impolite.

“Oh! Good afternoon Dr Lecter!”

Mr Graham’s expression on seeing him, to Hannibal’s surprise, appeared to be all happy welcome.

“Matthew,” Mr Graham continued briskly, turning to his friend, “you’ve no business being an oaf to Dr Lecter. Dr Lecter, this is my friend Matthew Brown, who is a layabout like myself and making a very good show of doing just that. Matthew this is Dr Lecter, who is a very distinguished man and as such ought to be allowed your seat.”

Hannibal slightly inclined his head. “Thank you, Mr Graham, but I was going to consult these books. I will go to the silent study room.”

“Oh please, call me Will!”

The words broke out, plaintive, uncontrolled, as before he had begged for Hannibal’s touch. The boy’s eyes were so wide and so foolish – the deer that walks hopefully to the hunter, expecting carrots and sugar-lumps.

“Call me Will here, at least!”

“Ah,” Brown had sat up in his chair and was raising one eyebrow. “So you know this doctor in his professional capacity, Will?”

And there was the confusion, the shame and fear that Hannibal expected his patients to show when there was the chance they would be unmasked. Mr Graham seemed not to have considered at all what he might give away in his welcome and his entreaties, and was blinking now, awkward, taken aback.

Hannibal cleared his throat. “Mr Graham has been so good as to consult me in the matter of some issues of muscular strain which trouble him. It is somewhat of a specialism of mine.”

Brown nodded. “Oh yes? Touching your toes and that sort of thing?”

“That sort of thing, yes.” Hannibal reminded himself that to stare at Brown with venom he felt, or to attempt to throttle him where he sat, would be not at all to the purpose.

“Sounds ghastly dull to me,” Brown observed, and stretched. Then he did extract himself from the chair, and with some apparent effort assumed a standing position. “And I’m sure you’re going to talk about it in excruciating dull detail, so I will take myself off to the chap I’m to see about a dog. Toodle-pip.”

He made an exit, and closed the door behind him. There was now no one else in the room besides the two of them.

“Take a seat, then, please,” said Mr Graham, with a more hesitant smile this time. “I can be quiet, if you want to work. Only tell me what to do.”

A strange ripple ran up Hannibal’s spine. Slowly, he took the seat. They were not quite directly facing as they would have been in his consulting room, but the echoes were striking, and he wondered if Mr Graham too felt a certain expectation of what might happen next.

There were so many desks in the room, and he could be bent over in a moment…

“Matthew is an idiot,” Mr Graham added, after a little period of silence during which Hannibal was all too aware that they were staring at each other. “I apologise for his behaviour.”

“It would seem to be casting your pearls before swine, to debate with such a man on such a topic.”

“I told you, Dr Lecter, I am dissolute, and it is among the dissolute that I move.” Mr Graham sighed and crossed his legs. It was hard to tell the precise nature of his discomfort. “And among the idle rich, one does not tend to find many interesting companions, only a great many who are sure that they are because once they wore a green carnation or read a book of Thomas Paine.”

“You are not like your friend.” Hannibal asserted.

“No, I am not.” And Mr Graham’s face broke into a smile quite small, and very, very soft. “I am not, I think, like most of the men I meet. But I suppose many people think that.”

“Many do. Few of them would realise that it was a common reflection.”

Leaning forward in his chair, Mr Graham tilted his head to the side. His pulse, once again, and despite his apparent state of rest, flickered at his throat. A moment passed, another; nervously, he sucked in his bottom lip, bit it, and released it, plump and slick, into view again.

“Do you suppose yourself unusual, Dr Lecter?”

Hannibal stared at him. He was fighting a deep and entirely specious conviction that, were he to make a command to Mr Graham now, that man would once more do exactly as ordered.

“If everyone – if anyone else – was like me, Mr Graham, the world would be a very different place.”

“You consider then that you are alone?”

“I might use the word ‘peerless’. But then you might call me arrogant.”

Mr Graham let out a short laugh, ducking his head. “And you might call me Will,” he said when he looked up, grinning.

“Hannibal,” Hannibal answered, and held out his hand. Will took it in his own, as he had so nearly done just days before, clutching in his frenzied pleasure. This time his palm was cool and dry, and Hannibal noticed he was wearing a heavy gold signet ring that he had not seen at the clinic.

There were a lot of questions he might ask, if would let himself, about Will Graham.

Their hands held slightly longer than Hannibal intended. He had been staring into Will’s eyes, fascinated again at their shifts and eddies, one moment hard glass, the next liquid pearl.

“And can you tell me, Hannibal, what it is that you are researching today?” Will, sitting up a little, smiled again and spoke brightly, breaking a little of the atmosphere which had gathered between them.

Hannibal looked down at the journals in his lap. He thought of the essays within on the nerves of the axilla, and the uses to which he intended to put them.

He thought of what Will’s face, what those eyes would do, were he to tell him that truth.

No, Hannibal was not like other men. Not in the slightest.

“I fear you would find the explanation very technical, and quite tedious.” Hannibal gathered his books in his arms and stood up briskly. Will gaped at him, confusion and hurt in his face, and Hannibal set his shoulders and hardened his heart.

“You have recalled me to my task, Mr Graham, and I am grateful for that. I’m have no doubt you will understand that there are many calls upon my time. The silent reading room, I am sure, will be better for my purposes - it is too warm in here, excuse me.”

Without a backwards glance, he left the room.

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Hannibal came to the Royal Institution the next evening to deliver the last in his series of lectures, beset by a strange, queasy hope too painful to examine.

He arrived early, watching his audience file in, and as he spoke he looked intently from face to face - all those bland turned-up pale bowls, awaiting his words to fill them. None were what he sought.

He concluded his thoughts by addressing his audience with more than his usual rhetoric, and a great deal less than his usual conviction, though he covered it in a tone of mockery.

“But if one of *you*, here,” he said, turning to address all round the curve of seating, “knows the means by which one may achieve what one desires, despite reason, despite rationality, despite the very rules of nature, then please, by all means, tell me how it is to be done.”

Silence. No voice raised, no grand gesture, no answering call. Then, thunderous applause, and he turned away in frustration, clenching his fists, telling himself he had never imagined anything else.

The auditorium emptied, and he watched, thorough to the last, and still no note. He went so far as to seek out the man who had been the messenger the week before, but found him asleep behind his desk, entirely devoid.

The note-writer had been a common poison-pen, then, or some time-waster, and Hannibal’s hopes, exposed as they finally died, were entirely pathetic.

Back at his house in Belgravia, Hannibal walked its safe boundaries for the first time feeling them to make it a prison. He entered his solitary calm for the first time feeling it to be an empty space.

More had ended this week, he decided, than just his lecture series and the apparent interest of the note-writer. The time had finally come for him to move on from his practice of medicine. He would give up seeing patients personally, leave that to Crawford and Bloom and move himself into the academic life, into research, study and the cut and thrust of dry debate. Take himself to a laboratory and do dissections, publish papers, even improve the sum total of human knowledge. He might pass off his kills as donated corpses, and that would be diverting. He might visit the continent on a lecture tour. He might do many things.

Regardless of all that he could do, one thing he could do no longer. His next session with Will – with Mr Graham - must be his last.

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Thursday was a wretched day, ice on the pavements turned, by the afternoon, to muddy slush, and Hannibal had been flinching each time he went to the waiting room at the sight of footmarks on his fine Turkish carpet.

For his final walk down the corridor, he was steeling himself for this and for more. He was not entirely sure, after their encounter two days earlier, that Mr Graham would have attended his appointment at all.

Which would of course have been a convenient thing, and one that Hannibal ought to have desired.

But there Mr Graham was, seated ready and thumbing through an illustrated paper of the trashiest kind, which he threw hastily on the table when Hannibal called.

“Dr Lecter,” he said, rising. He was carrying his hat and on this occasion a silver-topped cane. His manner of dress was different – older – than it had been on previous occasions; somewhat staid, elegant but formal, cutting no dashes.

“Mr Graham,” Hannibal gave half a bow. “If you will follow me, please.” As he set off back down the corridor, Hannibal was aware that his mouth was dry, that his stomach had the strangest tendency to ache.

And the arousal, too, building through him at the very sight and smell of another, the foolish learned response his body offered as if it was merely crude clay, another animal, easily lead.

But his mind would conquer all, his body included, and he had his plans for this afternoon, just as always – none beyond himself would be permitted to see weakness.

The door of his consulting room seemed to close behind them with a more than usually heavy click.

“I hope I did not offend you, when we met in St James’s Square?” Mr Graham placed his things down carefully before taking his usual seat. “That was not my intention.”

Hannibal shrugged slightly, looking away as if to meet the man’s eye was too much unnecessary effort. “You are my patient, and may talk to me or not as you choose.”

He could hear Mr Graham sighing. Probably his face looked quite plaintive. “But I…”

“Although, in fact,” Hannibal said, cutting in over him, still fiddling with his notepad and pen, affecting to consult some memorandum within, “that state of affairs will not much longer persist.” Looking up, he took a breath. “I have to inform you that I am ceasing my list, here, and all my patients will be transferring to one of my partners. They are both excellent and highly trained individuals, skilled in…”

Mr Graham lurched forward in his chair, almost leaping from it. “What? Why? Why now?”

Hannibal narrowed his eyes. “If you may talk, or not, then so may I. It is not, I think, any of your business what I choose to do.”

“But… today?” Mr Graham looked around the room. “Today, will we not…?”

Ah, of course, this man was in truth only concerned with his own bodily comfort. That was all it had ever been with him, and Hannibal had been a fool to forget, or to ever think otherwise.

“Today you shall have your drainage,” Hannibal told him sharply. His stomach was still hurting, a strange acid ball of discontent. “In fact there is another device I intend to assess for you, to better make the referral to your next physician. It may be that you do not need any further treatment from this clinic, and may, with the aid of this device, undertake your own therapy.”

Hannibal cleared his throat. It still did not sit easy with him, the idea of Crawford or Alana with their hands and eyes permitted what he had enjoyed. In the matter of this device, at least, then, he was entirely sincere.

More efficient, perhaps, to provide Mr Graham with another dildo. But no, it would seem, and to Hannibal’s great dismay, that he was capable of furious envy even of a leather tube stuffed with rags, if that object might go where he could not.

“I…” Mr Graham opened his mouth and closed it again. He stared at Hannibal a long moment, until Hannibal was on the brink of speaking, but then started moving, shrugging off his coat, casting it violently over the back of the chair and then making as if to go behind the screen.

“On this occasion,” Hannibal said, rising also, “you will only remove your shirt.”

Again, wide eyes staring at him.

But, “If you say so,” said Mr Graham, and, still standing, began to unbutton his jacket.

Hannibal could have told him to go behind the screen as before, but Mr Graham’s head was still up, his gaze steady – almost defiant – and it would have been too much of an admission to look away.

It was when Mr Graham had finally stripped to the waist and gone to sit ready on the edge of the examination couch, then, that Hannibal turned to the corner behind his desk where he had stored an item that Mr Graham’s first visit had put him in mind of. This item in particular was unproven, and scarcely in use – at least on an official basis. Unlike the vibrating seat, it was most definitely intended only for men, and Hannibal suspected the cod literature that would work out some plausible-sounding way for it to assuage some apparently dire symptom was still being concocted.

Carrying the box to the couch, he could not resist sweeping his gaze over what was laid before him – Mr Graham’s torso was, as he had anticipated, entirely lovely, every smooth line displaying classical grace. The heat the sight generated in him boiled unpleasantly at the sickness in his belly, and worsened the ache.

Seeming to divine Hannibal’s point of interest, Mr Graham shifted a little, undulating his stomach where it emerged from the band of his trousers. His nipples were flat, rosy discs, decorated with a sparse scattering of hair - Hannibal could have covered one with the pad of his thumb, but with scrutiny they started to tighten, standing proud.

“Few people are aware of just how inter-connected the nerves of the body are,” Hannibal began, as if he was lecturing again, as if he had many people to talk to and none of them mattered, as if he had all the time in the world. In logic and order, in cool fact, here was his sanctuary.

Setting the case on the end of the couch, he opened the catches, displaying the inside where the wires coiled from the battery element to the two rubber cups. “The reason, for example, that you find it pleasant to toy with your nipples and areolae is that nerves from those regions can signal almost instantly to nerves in the perineum.”

On the couch, Mr Graham nodded slowly, clearly waiting for more. He was kicking his feet as they dangled. He had taken off his shoes and socks at some point when Hannibal had not

been observing. Of course, Hannibal would never now have the chance to attempt any of the schemes he had sketched out for experimenting with the responses of the delicate arches of Mr Graham's feet. That was, really, quite an objective and scientific regret.

Hannibal cleared his throat. "You may find, therefore, that this method is all you require in future, and if so we can of course remove you from our books entirely."

Withdrawing the cups, he handed them over for Mr Graham to inspect. They were of vulcanized rubber, about the size of golf balls but with an opening in one end.

"These attach to your chest using vacuum suction permitted by the flexibility of the material. We place them over the nipple, causing an engorgement of blood and a stimulation of the nerves. In the mean time, the loose element inside, as you can see, abuts the nipple with a vibrating membrane. The nipple in the male, after all, is a vestigial and unnecessary item of anatomy, and to stimulate it causes no risk to the health, but can, in certain men, ultimately permit spermatic release."

"And so you are not going to… Only on my chest?" Mr Graham blinked up at him. He was half naked and, did he but know it, entirely at Hannibal's mercy, and yet in those eyes there was a challenge.

The foolish challenge of a deer who has followed a forest path a little way in companionship with a wolf, and thinks the predator to be only one of its fellows.

"I am not to be touched at all?" Mr Graham continued, that plaintiveness in his voice again, just as wistful as when all he had been asking was to use Hannibal's name. "Just to… wire myself to this and… and wait?"

"The method of your drainage is not the point."

Hannibal had *ideas*, of course, a galaxy of them, spiralling out and sparking with each time he saw Mr Graham afresh; he could put his mouth to Mr Graham's chest, suck the nipples taut and wet and tongue at them, provide the seal for the cups with his own saliva; he could

disconnect the cup element, and intermittently place the vibrating membrane as he chose, teasing and then retreating; he could do many things, and he would not, now, not ever.

The ache in Hannibal's belly dropped lower, dull.

With a sniff, Mr Graham returned the cups and then leant back, bracing his hands on the couch behind him, pushing his nipples forward and exposed. There was still a frown on his face, a look of bewildered unhappiness that Hannibal refused to react to.

Instead, he prepared the cups with some lubrication, wound the battery, and then carefully placed each of them over a nipple. At the first grip of the suction, Mr Graham bit his lip, his eyelids fluttering, and when Hannibal flicked the switch to begin the vibration, he bucked sharply where he sat, head arching back and legs falling apart as far as his trousers would permit as he thrust into the air. He might have been in heaven or hell; he was writhing like the sweetest of sinners.

And Hannibal was standing back and away from him, entirely without connection, just as he had planned. Now was the time to retreat further, to pretend to take notes, to detach entirely.

He couldn't tear his eyes away.

"That does work, that does…. Oh dear God!" Mr Graham curved backwards again, the two red cups obscenely jutting from his chest, and where his hands rested on the couch his knuckles had turned white, his nails digging into the upholstery. Then, with a sudden, violent movement even as he gasped, he started scrabbling at the crotch of his trousers, undoing his fly so that his member could poke free. It was stiff, red and nearly ready from just this stimulation, just as Hannibal had imagined.

A pearl of fluid beaded at the tip, the head peeking out from the foreskin, and Hannibal could smell him, and his mouth ached with wanting.

"The towels are just there, when they are required," Hannibal said, hoarse, and then turned around.

Firmly, finally, he put his back to Mr Graham.

“Touch it, you coward!”

Hannibal froze. He could not, for a moment, believe that he had heard the words.

If he had been a wolf indeed, his hackles would have risen as he turned, slow, and curled his lip.

“You are addressing me?”

“Yes! Yes I…. Oh!” Mr Graham was still wracked with pleasure, shivering with it, the skin of his chest reddening between his trapped nipples, his erection thickening, becoming wet. And yet he leant back and splayed himself further, obscene. And still, in his eyes, that pain. “It’s just a cock, Dr Lecter, I’m sure you’ve seen them. A lot of men have seen this, I assure you. You can’t taint me or change me or break me unless I want you to. But all I want from you now is your hand, coward, are you going to let me have it?”

With a surge forward, Hannibal was close enough to strike.

“You would do as well not to provoke me.”

“Or what?” Mr Graham was shuddering, panting, and still snapping out. “You’ll murder me like you murdered the man they found in Highgate? The one from the Thames hulks? The one that displaced the true cadaver in the mortuary at St Thomas Hospital? “

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Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

> Sorry that there was a slight delay posting this, life went a bit nuts for 24 hours and I couldn't get online when I needed to. However, final chapters up today so no more waiting *g* Thank you to everyone who has been encouraging this, I do appreciate it <3

Hannibal had never in his life experienced such an urge to sink his teeth into someone. Perhaps he could have called that same desperate wish ‘hunger’, a hunger unlike any he had known or fought before, one that threatened to consume him.

The need, the intense need he felt to… he could not find a word big or mighty or awful enough.

Could only know that Mr Graham, insolent and indolent, Mr Graham, unprecedented and impossible, Mr Graham, beautiful as Satan, called something out of him that he could no longer hope to control.

For all that, however, he tried to speak. Impossible to tell if his voice sounded level; the hurricane in his head allowed no fine judgements.

“You are either very brave or very stupid.”

And Mr Graham - still seated on the couch, with all the disadvantage of height which that brought, still so aroused as to be trembling with it, splayed - curled his lip in contempt.

“You, Dr Lecter, are the one who asked me to divulge the method by which one may obtain what one wants, be it irrational or unreasonable, or…” He cocked his head to one side. “How did you put it? Even against the laws of nature?”

Hannibal froze.

With a frustrated grunt, Mr Graham turned his head away, then reached up and pulled the cups from his chest. His nipples were left drawn fat and tight; it would not soon be comfortable for him to put his shirt back on.

"It had been my belief," Mr Graham's shoulders had slumped and his voice was weary, "that to get what I wanted I had merely to act in a way that might later be characterised as stupidity or bravery – history judges which of the two, in most cases. I had plans formulated and I attempted to carry them through. But it would appear in the end that I am no better in achieving my desires than you have been."

He sighed. "Is that truly why you spurn me, Dr Lecter, after all your talk? The laws of nature? Is that the reason you find me unreasonable? That you think this," he gestured to himself, "not worthy of wanting?"

His erection, engorged, was leaking down the crease of his trousers at his thigh, soaking through the bottom edges of his shirt, and still he was coherent. What power. What magnificent concealed power.

Hannibal could have gone to his knees.

"You," Hannibal murmured, and he spoke it like an invocation. "You, then, are the one who wrote me those letters? Who for so long evaded my notice?" He was laughing darkly as he finished the sentence, thinking of the way those words sounded now.

"Of course." Mr Graham, with a sudden movement, was jumping from the examination couch to the floor. His member – call it his cock, he had – jutted out hopeful still, and yet he proceeded to button it away in his trousers with scarcely a grimace. His abandon, it would seem, had been as much a gift as his obedience.

Cunning boy.

“I have been pursuing you, Dr Lecter, almost six months. I attended a lecture of yours in May, and I was… And you were…” he made a gasp, eyes fluttering, visibly struggling to maintain the patter of easy words that he seemed to want to convey.

“I told you before, I am dissolute, I have nothing worthwhile to do. Or at least, I did not. And so I made you my focus, my interest, my hobby, except…” His eyes closed again. “But then as I followed you, I saw you, I saw… I saw what you did, what you *are*.” A shudder, a shudder of a man too aroused to speak; Hannibal knew what that looked like on Mr Graham’s face, if he could only believe it.

“And the more time I spent observing you, and then around you, the more I hoped, in my foolishness,” Mr Graham reached for his shirt, putting in his arms so violently the fabric almost ripped, “that you might discover a similar interest in me. But clearly I am of no value to you at all. There,” he had his shirt on, somewhat buttoned, though his throat was still bare. “You have my address, and if you want to pursue this or me in any way you can find me there at any time you choose.” His words spat out, but he was shaking again.

Turning around, he went forward as if to get to the chair and his outdoor coat.

Hannibal stepped to block his path, drawing himself up, allowing no warmth into his eyes. Let young Mr Graham look at what creature he had cornered, and let his face not turn to stone, and then, only then, might Hannibal be able to believe.

“And find the police waiting with you to greet me,” Hannibal challenged, voice cold, “Ready to accuse me with any of the many crimes you might claim you have been witness to? I am not entirely foolish.”

Unabashed, Mr Graham’s eyes were meeting his, unblinking. Not a deer - or if he was, then it was a stag, a beast that can gore and knows it, a beast with sharp edges. “No, indeed you are not,” he said, and his voice had dropped to almost a whisper.

They were standing face-to-face, closer than they had ever been. An artery, from this position, could be quite easily torn open.

“You are, in truth, the most wonderful man I have ever met.” Mr Graham took a breath, and then half a step forward, palms open. “And I see now that all that has been wrong with me, all of my life, has been needing you inside me in every way possible. You think I would let anyone else have you, now?”

That was more than could be borne; Hannibal bared his teeth, and pushed them both down onto the floor, and put his mouth to that slim, pretty throat.

Under him, Mr Graham finally stilled, and Hannibal could feel with his lips the harsh movement of air in a heavy, happy sigh.

Hannibal drew back just enough to bring his mouth level to Mr Graham’s ear. He was hunched over him, pinning him completely.

“Are you afraid of me now?”

A shiver, a full-body shiver, and Hannibal had time to recall that Mr Graham’s nipples were swollen and sore, and his cock hard, and that he Hannibal was pressed against all three.

“Of course, Dr Lecter.” Now the boy moved, his arms coming up around Hannibal’s back to draw him in, his fingers threading into Hannibal’s hair, his legs parting and rising and closing again, tight, to trap Hannibal against him entirely. “I always have been.”

His voice was choked with emotion.

Hannibal bit him again, harder than before, right over that shuddering pulse. Then, blind and one-handed, he ripped the shirt back open, put a hand to a plump, over-stimulated nipple and pinched.

The resulting whimpers pleased him greatly.

“How much was a lie?” Hannibal hissed.

“Nothing!” Mr Graham bucked, his hips searching, and Hannibal shifted them so as to be able press his own knee down and bruise him just a little. “Oh! Nothing! That is,” a gasp, and he tried again, “I came to your surgery three weeks ago with the intention of achieving conversation with you, nothing more. I had researched the conditions you treat here, I had my story ready. I wanted to see you and talk to you and try to gauge how to make a better acquaintance. But then you offered… You, *you* were going to touch me and I had no hope to step away. When I realised what I could have you do…”

“Yes?” Hannibal got his hand between them, grasping none-too-gently at Mr Graham’s cock and brushing his own in the process. Slowly, he increased the pressure at which he squeezed. “You were making me do things for you, that is what you were saying?”

“I wanted you so much. Wanted to know if you could want me.”

“Mr Graham, you are nothing if not…”

“Call me Will! Please, for the love of God, call me Will.” There was a sob in his voice now, a helplessness that ran to Hannibal’s blood like wine.

“Will.” Hannibal flattened his palm, started rubbing. He wanted to get Will’s fly open again and see what he was doing, but that would have required moving, that would have required taking an ounce of weight from the extraordinary satisfaction of squashing Will to the floor. “If you saw what I was, how did you dare to do this to me?”

“Do what to you?” Will bit out, and Hannibal, confused, reared back a little to look at him.

Tears were in Will’s eyes, coursing over flushing skin. His fringe was plastered to his forehead, his neck littered with bite marks.

“Do what to you?” Will repeated, and that, even now, was half a sneer. “I haven’t even touched you yet.”

And all of a sudden, Hannibal found himself laughing. From ratcheting tension to its sudden release – he had long studied such physiological phenomena, but never experienced it, never thought of it, in this form. He couldn’t resist the grin that wanted to spread over his face, the joy of it, the slowly rising realisation of what truly had happened. Was happening.

He came up onto all fours, all the while looking down at his captive. Will was pouting, the boyish, spoiled side all in evidence, and Hannibal wanted to close his mouth over him everywhere.

A poor job, though, if he could not have the self-control to give this personal demon what he deserved. This room was unworthy of them and their union - this whole establishment that was built on chicanery and false morals.

Hannibal pushed up off the floor, coming to stand on his feet, and now Will’s face was really falling, disappointment clouding fast across his countenance.

Hannibal held out his hand.

“Rise to your own challenge then,” he said, and smiled. “If, that is, you are indeed coming home with me?”

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“Once you step over this threshold,” Hannibal said, once he was sure he had heard the cab disappearing down the street, “you cannot easily pass back again.”

Over the course of the journey, a more serious mood had overcome him. They could not touch in the cab, and without that reassurance there had been space for doubt.

But, “Like Bluebeard’s wife?” Will offered back easily enough, and then seemed to hear what he had said and ducked his head. He looked surprisingly respectable with his overcoat done up and covering all manner of sins and stains beneath, the bruises at his throat hidden by a silk scarf.

Hannibal frowned. “You have truly seen and understood what it is that I do?” he asked again, still incredulous.

When Will looked back up, his eyes were shining. “Yes,” he said, a long slow luxurious syllable, and in a tone that made Hannibal’s skin tingle.

And so Hannibal unlocked his front door, and as they entered made no attempt to guide Will into one part of the house or another, to divert or deceive or conceal. Watching Will pacing his floors, craning his neck to study each room, breaking into smiles at the sight of certain objects – *I saw you using this in removing that leg bone, you much teach me to swing it as you do* – he felt a rising humming spark across his body, beginning to understand that it was not just Will Graham who was now traversing a boundary. Each step Will took changed Hannibal also, and his own residual fear was fading fast.

Though they could not seem to part, they held back from any more touching than the brush of hands on arms and shoulders. The frantic tenor had gone from the day, and instead that slow, building hum made time liquid, and smooth and plentiful.

The snow began falling softly as Hannibal prepared their evening meal. Will had gone briefly to bathe and to change, and emerged dressed in one of Hannibal’s Persian silk robes, swamped by the size intended for a larger man, still with droplets of water on his skin.

“No one will be concerned as to where you are this evening?” Hannibal permitted himself to enquire, busy with a béchamel sauce.

“I am rich because I am an orphan,” Will said easily, and helped himself to some of the wine Hannibal had open on the table. “If I were to die mysteriously, I suppose in a month or perhaps two my cousins in Wales would engage some detective to prove I was truly gone,

and then bless their own good fortune and make even more foolish investments than I have done."

"My parents died when I was ten," Hannibal found himself saying. The words seemed to arrive simply into the space between them. Will made no comment directly, but after a few minutes came to refill Hannibal's glass, and brushed close against him with his whole body.

The marks he had left on Will's neck gave Hannibal a thrill of gratification whenever he caught sight of them, and he felt a certainty that the memory of this moment would do the same - this sensation, suddenly, of safety.

"You have no servants?" Will asked in his turn.

Hannibal explained his arrangements. Then, setting down his knife, parsley chopped, he smiled. "And you have no illusions, I hope that we can continue now as doctor and patient? It would not be at all proper."

"Well, let us be proper at any cost." Will grinned.

"Also, do not imagine that I am simply going to service your body as I have been, that being the case."

Now Will's expression closed over.

"Is your affection for me predicated on it?" Hannibal tilted his head, genuinely curious.

"I want your mind more than I want your body. But I do want your body."

"*With my body, I thee worship*…" Hannibal teased. He came closer, put an arm around Will's waist. Things slipped and slid together, keys in a lock turning and rearranging the facets of

reality, and for the first time it became possible to dip his head and kiss Will on the mouth. Will keened, and bent back under him.

All too soon, Hannibal made himself pull away.

“Take my body, then,” Hannibal told him, and glanced at the floor. “Touch me as you threatened to.”

With pleasingly instant understanding, Will fell to his knees. Sitting back on his heels, he looked up, eyes hot, licked his lips once, lavishly, and opened his mouth to wait.

“What am I to do with you?” Hannibal wondered aloud, undoing his fly and freeing the flesh within. He was bigger than Will here as well as in the rest of his frame, and he was interested to see how Will would set about approaching the task.

The answer, yet again, took him aback. For Will at once made a sound of deep approval and shuffled forward on his knees, took Hannibal’s cock in hand and stuck his pink tongue gently under his foreskin, proceeding to lick around the sensitive head with not only expertise but enthusiasm, and Hannibal was required to channel much of his energy simply to keep his knees straight.

For a while he allowed himself to be toyed with. Will’s tongue flickered at his slit, and his lips closed prettily, over and over, at his very tip, so far and no further. After a time of this, though, he tried taking Will’s head lightly between his hands, and began some shallow thrusts. Sooner than he’d expected, Will coughed and drew back a little, eyes watering.

“I do not normally let men do that, in this act,” Will explained. And then, grinning and blinking through his tears, grabbing Hannibal’s hips to halt his retreat - “but I want you to. I want you to do *everything* to me.”

Hannibal had to grip at the base of his cock firmly, staving off a release that would have thwarted what he was now so desperate to finally achieve.

“Stand up and take your trousers off,” he spat out. “All the way off, leave them on the floor.”

This done – Will’s hands were shaking - Hannibal stepped again closer.

“Your shirt as well, if you please.”

Will’s nipples were still a little redder, a little larger than they had been at the start of the day. Hannibal let himself reach out and rub at them, and Will hissed, stumbling backwards until his back hit the kitchen wall.

Hannibal pursued, crowding up against him before pulling away just enough to allow himself to cup Will’s buttocks in his hands.

“Now,” he said. “Open for me.”

Will cried his name like a prayer, and obeyed, and let himself be bodily lifted, clamping his legs around Hannibal’s waist and then slowly descending, impaled on the spit-slick length of Hannibal’s cock, thicker than anything Hannibal had seen him take so far.

Wincing – just a little – Will’s head fell forward as he buried his face in the curve of Hannibal’s neck, gasping out noises that hinted at words begging for more.

Inside his body, he was the very Inferno. Hannibal thrust in and in to him, until he was fully seated, and thought of the agony of all bliss - that in existing it necessitates the tragedy of its own end.

This lasted scarcely any time at all; disjointed, rough thrusting between them, Hannibal trying to memorise each second, each sound, each smell, Will clinging, dragging him in, barely allowing him to withdraw even to press in again. They were one beast of two backs, and this was a pleasure that made everything Hannibal had ever attempted in his clinic less than a shadow on a wall.

“In me, in me, in me,” Will was chanting, hoarse, and it could have been prayer or truth or imprecation.

Later, dishevelled, their fish and potatoes eaten and praised, Hannibal took a deep draught of wine and then a mouthful of his own spend, which he sucked from Will’s tender hole as Will lay on the edge of the dining table, bare again, legs open, presented once more for Hannibal’s gaze. Then he put his cock back into Will, this time with the assistance of oil, and introduced a new wax candle alongside it, nothing else being readily to hand and Will so clearly in want of that stimulating stretch he relished. Will covered them both in the vigour of his appreciation, and was so entirely beautiful in his release that Hannibal found it necessary to carry him upstairs, all promises to cease being a glorified body servant forgotten.

In Hannibal’s bed, they lay quiet a while. Will curled into the circle of Hannibal’s arms, and slept a little, and Hannibal ran his mind back and over the chain of memories he was reshaping, trickling through the thoughts like notes forming at last into a tune.

He allowed his fingers to ripple on Will’s skin as if they played an instrument. Whimpering a little, Will shifted and then suddenly stiffened, waking abruptly and with the first look of real fear that Hannibal had seen on him.

It was as he saw Hannibal that this faded, replaced at once with a happy comfort such as Hannibal had never thought to inspire in all his days.

“You said many men had touched you,” Hannibal observed, softening the question with a kiss to Will’s temple, then the curve of his throat. “Did one before our first meeting? I refer to our first appointment in this context, as I was not aware of the times we shared before.” He cleared his throat. “Upon reflection, I find your story of a stimulatory device from a newspaper less credible than I did, but your dear fundament was undoubtedly exercised.”

Will gave a petulant sigh, stretched out his limbs and frowned apologetically. “I visited your offices the first time, you will recall, on a Thursday. The day before it had been your lecture. You were, naturally, impressive, and besides wore the tightest of waistcoats, and I was quite distracted. I would have fingered myself to the point of blindness in the front row of the auditorium if it would not have had me thrown out.”

“That idea is… not without merit. But on this occasion you turned to other relief?”

“A policeman’s truncheon. And no, you may stop looking at me like that, I mean that as no euphemism. Policemen are stupid enough to steal anything from, and those things have a lovely width to them, properly greased. I used it that night, and again the next day to try and achieve some calm before I saw you – well you know how well that worked. I have the thing still, in fact, at my lodgings. So you see, it was scarcely a lie at all.”

“What shall we do with you?” Hannibal asked, conscious that he was repeating himself, delighted to think of all the myriad range of ideas he had for answers. He let his hand wander between Will’s legs, exploring the contractility regained by the muscle there since earlier exploits.

“Mmmm, your whole fist, I hope, one day,” Will murmured, snuggling back, cocking his leg open further.

Hannibal went to bite him, but before his teeth had closed Will was already crying out with small whimpers of pain, and Hannibal saw with amusement that he was hardening yet again.

“Have you done that before?”

“No, not ever.” Will was panting, he arched his neck back. “And, oh, please know that when we hunt together, that will be my first time, for I have never before shared that activity with anyone.”

“But…” Hannibal pulled away somewhat, the better to study him. “But you have done that? Already?”

Will smirked, pure white teeth on blood red lips. “Why do you think the Royal Institution suddenly needed you to lecture again so soon? I have no doubt Dr Fell’s thoughts on the topic would have been illuminating, but I wanted so much to be able again to hear you.”

Hannibal's chest was suddenly hollow with the force of his need.

"Let me inside you," he said – begged, abject – and at once Will was drawing him close, only sobbing a little as he was once again penetrated. Hannibal kissed him, licked the tears from his face and fed them both the ever thinner spend from Will's tired cock. Once seated carefully deep inside, Hannibal did not move, just stayed there, gazing and tasting, sucking intermittently at the much-abused nipples as though he might feed there too, until finally Will's eyes rolled back in his head and he spasmed internally, and Hannibal was scarcely even aware when his own orgasm began or ended, so wonderful he felt.

Lifting Will once more in his arms, he carried him to the bath.

"You do want me," Will observed softly, a little after, as he lay in the copper tub, quiescent and calm. He spoke as though he had uncovered the mysteries of the universe. Reaching out, he cupped Hannibal's cheek in his hand and drew him in.

It was like closing a circuit, like throwing a switch, like the cure to all things.

Epilogue

“Countess Marvelli has been cheating at our card game again,” Will reported, throwing down his gloves onto the little table just inside the door of the wide, airy room at *primo piano* level of the house.

Crossing from the balcony, Hannibal brought him a glass of sweet wine. “Is that so, my dearest?” he inquired, and with his other hand lifted Will’s chin, studied a face flushed, he suspected, from a little more than the Italian heat. Will’s eyes were black, his pupils at full bloom and his lips swollen from biting. Hannibal tutted appreciatively, “I am impressed that you could still count the cards in your current state.”

As always, the praise made Will fairly glow. Smiling over the rim of his glass, he sipped his wine, and then kissed the flavour into Hannibal’s mouth.

“Mmm,” Will murmured as they parted, licking his lips. “And you have been idling all your morning reading and eating figs. And where are mine?”

“Come,” Hannibal told him, and took his hand, leading him outside to the open balcony, from where the whole of the Grand Canal lay spread out and glittering beneath them in the sunshine.

They had been at this palazzo for nearly five weeks. Hannibal had visited Venice before in his life, and been greatly pleased with it, but he had never considered what additional pleasure it would be to guide a companion around its many beauties and many pleasing abominations.

Six months had passed since Will Graham had flung Hannibal’s own nature in his face in that stuffy consulting room. Hannibal had barely been back to the place – it held little further use or diversion for him, and besides, Will had made an entirely touching indication of how little he appreciated the idea of Hannibal’s hands at the service of anyone but himself.

Their first joint undertaking had been in the final dispatching of Sir Victor. Will had been nervous – that was only to be expected – and then quite, quite glorious. That had been their

second consummation, and now Hannibal wore Will's signet ring, and Will a slim gold band they had selected together in Paris.

Italy for the summer – a cliché in some ways, perhaps, but Hannibal wanted to see Will framed in every natural beauty, and their time here had been most satisfactory, quite besides keeping them out of the thoughts of the London police.

Now, with a sigh, Will sank into one of the little chairs arranged by the sun umbrella, setting himself very carefully as he rested. Tipping back his head, he closed his eyes, throat arched. To a casual observer, such as the boats plying their way to and fro below them, he might have seemed to be only appreciating the sun.

Hannibal came to stand behind him, and bent enough to bring his hand to Will's crotch. He chuckled as he felt Will's cock twitch and swell further under his touch, and stepped away, turning the movement so that he could pass the plate of ripe figs.

"Would you like one then?"

Will narrowed his eyes at him, and panted.

Hannibal took one himself, and ripped it in half. Keeping eye contact with Will, he pointed his tongue and dug it into the heart of the red flesh.

"Damn you," Will murmured, legs parting further.

"It sounds as though you have been a very good boy today, paying such attention – did you win anything?"

"A few thousand," Will tossed his hair. He was sweating. "I let her take more than she deserved, let her feel safe."

Hannibal tipped his head in acknowledgement. Then, every movement deliberate, he went to sit also, pushing his chair back from the table so as to create a space in front of him.

Eyes widening gratefully, Will rose at once to come to his knees, arranging himself between Hannibal's legs and facing away from him, posterior raised for inspection.

Only after having taken another leisurely sip of wine, Hannibal tapped at where the base of the dilator was just visible through the straining fabric of Italian linen trousers. Will had come a long way from when simply wearing the dilator had prevented him attending Hannibal's penultimate lecture in November for fear of forgetting himself, but of course as he grew accustomed to each diameter and weight, Hannibal was only too pleased to challenge him with a larger.

"Undo your trousers and push them down," Hannibal instructed. Fumbling, Will obeyed.

The balcony was a solid barrier to about the waist height of a standing man. Kneeling as he was, Will was completely concealed from passers by. Hannibal liked the idea of displaying him, had contemplated it in several ways, but had yet to reconcile it with his need – so intense, so unprecedented in him – to protect.

Now, presented with the sight of Will's beautiful behind, he felt like never allowing the view to another soul. He traced his palm over one curve appreciatively, then gave him the slightest of smacks, just to enjoy the squirming that followed.

"Please, oh please!" Will coughed, and wiggled those globes enticingly. "Please can I have some more?"

"Aren't you full yet?"

A turned head, a demonic glint in the sleek, predatory eyes over a filthy grin. "Never, my love."

Hannibal sat back and sipped his wine. Kicking off his shoe, he lifted his bare foot and trailed over the dilator this time with his toe. Amused, he bared the other, and used both feet to pull apart the buttocks and then release them suddenly, so that they buffeted all that was inside.

He loved to suck at Will's nipples, and his pretty cock, and to tease the inside of his thigh, the tender curve of his armpit, the tendons of his throat. But above all, for both of them, the seat of desire remained here.

"Go inside, then" Hannibal told him, relenting, and handed over a rug from another chair so that Will could easily cover himself and walk within.

Following close after, he found Will on their wide bed and once more on all fours. Mouth dry, Hannibal stripped rapidly, then came to kneel beside him and gently tapped his shoulder, urging him to turn onto his back.

When he saw Will's face, the way in which Will looked at him, he had to kiss him again, long and slow, even though his own urgency was rising fast. For all his defiance, Will was once more fairly trembling with need.

Kneeling between Will's legs, Hannibal pushed them back until he had the angle and access he wanted, and then, very carefully, pulled the dilator free.

At once, a little of his semen trapped inside from that morning started to leak out, and Will made a sound of loss. Hannibal leant up to stroke soothingly at his belly, then less soothingly at his lovely stiff cock, which was hot as an iron brand and already leaking.

"I will never leave you empty, darling," Hannibal told him, and thrust in, home.

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